



FROM THE FILES OF THE DIRT DIVA DIARIES  
**Companion Planting Chart**

*Who grows well together, who to keep apart, and how to make your containers work harder*

**Ivy says:** "Quick science check: companion planting claims range from well-documented to total gardening folklore. What IS proven: plants with compatible water, light, and nutrient needs always do better together than plants competing for different things. That's the #1 rule. Everything else is a helpful bonus."

✓ **GOOD COMPANIONS — PROVEN CONTAINER COMBINATIONS**

MAIN CROP	GOOD COMPANIONS	BENEFITS & WHY IT WORKS	CONTAINER TIP
🍅 <b>Tomatoes</b>	Basil (primary), parsley, carrots, marigolds, nasturtiums, chives	Basil may improve flavor and repel thrips; marigolds deter aphids and whiteflies; compatible water and light needs	20+ gal: 1 tomato (center) + 4-6 basil (edge)
🌶️ <b>Peppers</b>	Basil, spinach (early season), onions/chives, marigolds	Basil may repel aphids; spinach harvests before peppers need full space; compatible water needs	10 gal: 1 pepper + 2 basil plants
🥒 <b>Cucumbers</b>	Beans, peas, radishes, nasturtiums, marigolds, dill (young)	Beans fix nitrogen; radishes mark rows and harvest before cucumbers spread; compatible moisture needs	5 gal: cucumbers (trellis) + radishes around base until harvest
🍲 <b>Squash / Zucchini</b>	Beans, radishes, nasturtiums, marigolds, borage	Beans fix nitrogen for heavy-feeding squash; nasturtiums trap aphids; Three Sisters concept	10 gal: squash center + beans at edge for nitrogen boost
🥬 <b>Lettuce &amp; Greens</b>	Radishes, carrots, strawberries, chives, most herbs, spinach	Radishes mark rows and harvest before lettuce matures; shallow and deep roots don't compete	5 gal: lettuce + 6-8 radishes (harvest radishes as lettuce fills in)
🥕 <b>Carrots</b>	Onions, leeks, chives, rosemary, sage, lettuce	Onion family may deter carrot fly; lettuce and carrots have different root zones (shallow vs deep)	Deep 5 gal: carrots + shallow lettuce on surface
🌱 <b>Beans &amp; Peas</b>	Carrots, cucumbers, squash, radishes	Beans fix atmospheric nitrogen, benefiting heavy-feeding neighbors; compatible watering schedules	5 gal: beans as standalone (nitrogen fixers do well alone too)
🌿 <b>Basil</b>	Tomatoes, peppers, most vegetables, marigolds	Aromatic oils may confuse/deter pests; same warmth and moisture preferences as most vegetables	Interplant around any warm-season crop; excellent space filler
🌼 <b>Marigolds</b>	All vegetables — universal companion	French marigolds deter aphids, whiteflies, and nematodes; attract beneficial predatory insects	1-2 marigolds in any large container or placed between containers
🌿 <b>Nasturtiums</b>	Tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, kale, all brassicas	Excellent aphid trap crop — aphids prefer nasturtiums over vegetables; edible flowers too	Let trail over edge of containers; plant at edge of any large pot

⚠️ **POOR COMPANIONS — KEEP APART**

CROP 1	KEEP AWAY FROM	WHY
<b>Tomatoes</b>	Brassicas (broccoli, cabbage, kale)	Compete for nutrients; different pH preferences
<b>Tomatoes</b>	Fennel	Fennel inhibits most plants — grow alone
<b>Beans &amp; Peas</b>	Onions, garlic, chives, leeks	Onion family may inhibit nitrogen fixation in beans
<b>Peppers</b>	Fennel	Same inhibition effect
<b>Lettuce</b>	Parsley (in same pot)	Parsley may slow lettuce growth when root-bound together
<b>Carrots</b>	Dill (mature plants)	Mature dill releases compounds that inhibit carrots
<b>Mint</b>	Everything	Mint dominates any container it's in — always pot alone
<b>Fennel</b>	Almost everything	Allelopathic — releases growth inhibitors. Grow in its own pot, away from others.

⚠️ **The Science Reality Check**

Many companion planting claims are traditional wisdom, not proven science. The MOST IMPORTANT companion factors are:

1. Similar water needs (non-negotiable) · 2. Similar light needs · 3. Similar nutrient needs · 4. Compatible root depths

Smell and pest deterrence are bonus effects — real but inconsistent. Water/light/nutrient compatibility is what actually makes or breaks container combinations.



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# Companion Planting — Container Combos & Compatibility

Ready-to-plant combinations and the water/light/nutrient compatibility that actually matters most

## 🌱 READY-TO-PLANT CONTAINER COMBOS

### 🌱 Large Containers (20+ gal)

**Tomato + Basil (x4-6)** Classic combination; basil deters pests, compatible water needs

**Tomato + Marigolds (x3) + Nasturtiums** Pest management trio; marigolds deter, nasturtiums trap aphids

**Tomato + Basil + Parsley** All prefer full sun, consistent moisture, and regular feeding

**Pepper + Basil (x2) + Chives** All heat-lovers; basil and chives at edges under pepper canopy

### 🌱 Medium Containers (10 gal)

**Pepper + Basil (x2)** Same heat, water, and feeding preferences

**Lettuce (x3-4) + Radishes (x6-8)** Radishes harvest before lettuce needs the space

**Kale + Chives + Radishes** All cool-season; radishes fill in while kale grows up

**Spinach + Carrots** Shallow spinach + deep carrots = different root zones

**Cucumber + Radishes (early)** Radishes ready before cucumber takes over; trellis cucumbers up

## 🌱 HERB CONTAINER COMBOS

### 🌱 Mediterranean Herb Mix (10 gal)

**Rosemary + Thyme + Oregano + Sage** All prefer lean, fast-draining soil and infrequent watering

**Lavender + Thyme + Rosemary** All Mediterranean; minimal water, full sun, alkaline-tolerant soil

### 🌱 Tender Herb Mix (10 gal)

**Basil + Cilantro + Parsley** All prefer rich, moist soil and regular watering

**Basil + Chives + Dill (young)** Compatible needs; harvest dill young before it competes

### ✗ Never Mix These Herb Groups

Mediterranean herbs + moisture-loving herbs in the same container is the most common herb container mistake. Rosemary and basil have completely opposite watering needs. One thrives while the other rots — every time.

**Mint:** Always its own container. It will crowd out everything else within one season.

## 🌱 COMPATIBILITY BY NEED — MOST IMPORTANT

### 💧 Water Compatibility

#### High Water (daily in summer)

Lettuce, cucumbers, squash, basil, cilantro, spinach — mix freely

#### Moderate Water (every 1-2 days)

Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, beans, kale, chard — mix freely

#### Low Water (every 2-3 days)

Rosemary, thyme, oregano, sage, lavender — Mediterranean only

### ☀️ Light Compatibility

#### Full Sun (6-8+ hrs)

Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, eggplant, basil, most herbs — compatible with each other

#### Partial Sun (4-6 hrs)

Lettuce, spinach, arugula, cilantro, mint, peas — do NOT mix with full-sun crops in same container

### 🌱 Nutrient Compatibility

#### Heavy feeders (weekly)

Tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, eggplant — feed whole container together

#### Moderate feeders

Kale, chard, lettuce, basil, most herbs

#### Light feeders / N-fixers

Beans, peas, Mediterranean herbs — overfertilizing hurts them

### ➕ 5 Rules for Container Companion Planting

➕ **Rule 1 (non-negotiable):** Similar water needs. You cannot water a thirsty plant and a drought-tolerant plant differently in the same pot.

➕ **Rule 2:** Similar light needs. Don't grow shade-tolerant lettuce under a sun-hungry tomato.

➕ **Rule 3:** Compatible root depths. Shallow + deep = no competition. Shallow + shallow = crowding.

➕ **Rule 4:** One harvests before the other needs space. Succession companions give you two crops from one container.

➕ **Rule 5:** Keep size-compatible plants together. Don't plant a dwarf herb under a sprawling squash.

### 🌱 Ivy's Top 5 Container Companion Combos

1. 🍅 Tomato + 🌱 Basil (20 gal) — the classic; proven every season
2. 🥬 Lettuce + 🌱 Radishes (5 gal) — two harvests, zero wasted space
3. 🌶️ Pepper + 🌱 Basil + Chives (10 gal) — heat-lovers together
4. 🌿 Rosemary + Thyme + Oregano (10 gal) — the Mediterranean trio
5. 🥬 Kale + 🌱 Radishes + Chives (10 gal) — cool-season powerhouse

### 📖 My Companion Planting Experiments

What I tried and what I observed:

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