



FROM THE FILES OF THE DIRT DIVA DIARIES
Companion Plants Quick Reference

Ivy's honest verdict on every companion planting claim · Companion to Ripe Rewards: A Beginner's Guide to Growing Epic Tomatoes · DirtDivaDiaries.com

Companion planting is all the rage on social media — but trendy doesn't mean important. Ivy dug deeper so you don't have to. Each plant below gets a straight verdict: what the claim is, what the evidence actually shows, and Ivy's practical take. Some are genuinely useful. Some are fine if you enjoy them. And at least one has a conflict you need to know about before you plant it. Grow your own way — with your eyes open.

THE COMPANION PLANTS — IVY'S PLANT-BY-PLANT VERDICT

 Basil <small>Ocimum basilicum</small>	 Marigolds <small>Tagetes spp.</small>	 Carrots <small>Daucus carota</small>	 Onions <small>Allium cepa</small>	 Garlic <small>Allium sativum</small>
<p>POPULAR CLAIM Sweetens tomato flavor & repels aphids when planted nearby</p> <p>IVY'S VERDICT ✓ CONFIRMED — PEST REPELLING ? UNPROVEN — FLAVOR BOOST</p> <p>WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS Basil's strong scent does help repel aphids — that part holds up. The "sweeter tomatoes" claim has been tested and studied with no definitive results. University tests haven't confirmed it.</p> <p>BEST USE Plant near tomatoes for natural aphid deterrence. Bonus: you grow fresh basil for cooking at the same time.</p> <p>★ Ivy: "Plant this with your tomatoes to help repel aphids, but for sweetness it is likely a waste of time. Worst-case scenario, you get some fresh basil to eat — it's a win-win!"</p>	<p>POPULAR CLAIM Repels pests, improves tomato health, and may enhance flavor</p> <p>IVY'S VERDICT ~ LIKELY — PEST MASKING ✓ CONFIRMED — ATTRACTS POLLINATORS</p> <p>WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS Marigolds mask the scent of tomato plants so pests have trouble locating them — tested to be somewhat effective. They also genuinely attract pollinators and add color to the garden.</p> <p>BEST USE Plant as a border or interplant throughout the tomato bed. Especially valuable in summers with high pest pressure.</p> <p>★ Ivy: "If you like marigolds, plant them. If you don't, don't. Grow your own way! Marigolds do attract pollinators — that's a real value regardless of the pest claims."</p>	<p>POPULAR CLAIM Loosen compacted soil around tomato roots, improving drainage and root penetration</p> <p>IVY'S VERDICT ~ LIKELY — SOIL LOOSENING ○ OPTIONAL — SPACE-DEPENDENT</p> <p>WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS Carrot taproots do help break up soil as they grow — this is likely true. However, if your soil is already well-amended, the benefit is minimal.</p> <p>BEST USE Best if you're short on garden space and need a spot for carrots anyway. Skip if you have good soil and tight planting areas.</p> <p>★ Ivy: "If you have space, give it a try — but if you've got good soil it's unnecessary. Where I plant my tomatoes, dealing with a root crop would be tough."</p>	<p>POPULAR CLAIM Deters insect pests with strong odor and loosens soil around tomato roots</p> <p>IVY'S VERDICT ✓ CONFIRMED — INSECT DETERRENT ~ LIKELY — SOIL IMPROVEMENT</p> <p>WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS Onions' strong odor helps keep some insect pests away. Their bulb growth also loosens the soil, improving air and water penetration around tomato roots.</p> <p>BEST USE Plant at the edges of the tomato bed. Onions and tomatoes share similar water needs — no conflict here, unlike garlic.</p> <p>★ Ivy: "Onions can help keep some insect pests away — it's like having natural pest repellers in the neighborhood. And they double as a kitchen staple!"</p>	<p>POPULAR CLAIM Powerful odor repels pests when planted near tomatoes</p> <p>IVY'S VERDICT ✓ CONFIRMED — PEST REPELLING ⚠ CAUTION — WATER CONFLICT</p> <p>WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS Garlic does repel pests — that's true. BUT it has a critical conflict: garlic needs water withheld for ~2 weeks at curing time, which is exactly when tomatoes are finishing fruit and need maximum water.</p> <p>BEST USE Choose basil or marigolds instead for pest repelling without the water conflict. If you grow garlic, keep it in a separate bed.</p> <p>⚠ Ivy: "You will have to choose between good tomatoes and good garlic if you plant them together. A better option here is the basil or marigolds."</p>

AT-A-GLANCE CLAIM COMPARISON

PLANT	PEST REPELLING	FLAVOR / YIELD BOOST	SOIL BENEFIT	WATER COMPATIBILITY
🌿 Basil	✓ Confirmed — strong scent masks tomatoes from aphids	? Unproven — tested, no definitive result	○ None	✓ Compatible — similar water needs
🌻 Marigolds	~ Likely — scent masking, somewhat effective	? Unproven	○ None	✓ Compatible
🥕 Carrots	○ None	○ None	~ Likely — taproot loosens soil	✓ Compatible
🧅 Onions	✓ Confirmed — strong odor deters insects	○ None	~ Likely — bulb growth improves aeration	✓ Compatible
🧄 Garlic	✓ Confirmed — powerful odor repels pests	○ None	○ None	⚠ Conflict — curing needs dry period vs tomato water peak

✓ Confirmed = evidence supports claim
? Unproven = tested, no definitive result
○ None = no evidence for this claim
~ Likely = plausible, limited formal study
⚠ Conflict = real practical problem

⚠ **The Garlic Water Conflict — Read Before You Plant**

⚠ **Garlic curing stage:** Garlic needs water completely withheld for approximately 2 weeks while it cures before harvest. This dry period is non-negotiable for good garlic bulb development.

⚠ **Tomato fruiting peak:** That 2-week garlic dry period lands squarely when your tomatoes are finishing their fruit and need consistent, deep watering most. Water stress at this point causes blossom end rot and cracking.

⚠ **Ivy's verdict:** "It is very difficult to water both tomatoes and garlic properly when planted together." Use basil or marigolds for pest repelling instead — same benefit, no conflict.

★ **Ivy's Top 3 Companion Picks — No Regrets**

- 1. Basil + Marigolds together** — plant both and cover all your bases. Basil repels aphids, marigolds attract pollinators and mask your tomatoes. Both reward you with harvests of their own.
- 2. Onions at the border** — no water conflict, real pest deterrence, and they grow happily alongside tomatoes all season with zero management headaches.
- 3. Carrots only if needed** — if you're tight on space, tuck carrots in. Otherwise focus on soil amendments over companion plants for soil improvement.



FROM THE FILES OF THE DIRT DIVA DIARIES

Companion Plants Quick Reference · Page 2

Myth-busting · Ivy's planting philosophy · What the science actually says · DirtDivaDiaries.com

THE COMPANION PLANTING CLAIMS — WHAT IVY FOUND WHEN SHE DUG DEEPER

✦ The Basil-Tomato Flavor Myth

THE POPULAR CLAIM

"Planting basil next to tomatoes makes the tomatoes taste sweeter and richer." You'll see this everywhere — books, social media, garden centres.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

"This has been tested and studied with no definitive results." University research has tried to prove a chemical link between basil and tomato flavor. Results: inconclusive. Tomato flavor comes from genetics, ripeness, sun, and soil — not neighboring plants.

✦ Ivy: "For sweetness, it is likely a waste of time — but you still get to repel aphids AND grow fresh basil. That's a good deal regardless."

✦ The Marigold Pest Barrier Myth

THE POPULAR CLAIM

"Marigolds create a protective zone around tomatoes, repelling a wide range of insects including whiteflies, nematodes, and aphids." Often presented as a proven, reliable pest barrier.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Marigolds have been "tested to be somewhat effective" — they help but don't create a reliable barrier. The mechanism is scent masking: their odor makes it harder for pests to find tomato plants. Pollinator attraction is the most well-documented benefit, and it's real.

✦ Ivy: "University tests haven't given us a definitive answer. However, marigolds do attract pollinators — so give it a try. Worst-case scenario, your garden gets a splash of color."

📱 The Social Media Companion Hype

THE POPULAR CLAIM

Social media is full of confident companion planting lists: "Always plant these 12 plants near your tomatoes!" Lists grow longer every season, often citing each other without original research.

WHAT IVY ACTUALLY THINKS

"The fact that it is a trendy topic doesn't make it an important topic." Ivy's approach is evidence-first: she assessed each plant individually, acknowledged what the research shows (or doesn't), and gave practical advice based on real garden management — not internet trends.

✦ Ivy: "Let's dig a little deeper into companion plants for tomatoes." — Then she did exactly that, plant by plant, with honest verdicts on each claim.

→ Root Companions: Carrots & Onions

THE ROLE OF ROOT CROPS AS COMPANIONS

Carrot taproots create channels that improve drainage and root penetration for nearby tomatoes. Onions' strong odour actively deters insects — same mechanism as garlic, but without the curing-water conflict.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION

Main trade-off: harvesting carrots and onions involves digging near tomato roots. Harvest early in the season, or plant in adjacent rows rather than directly interplanted.

★ Key: "Carrots and onions can help loosen the soil around tomato plants, improving air and water penetration and promoting healthy root development."

🧄 Why Garlic Is the Tricky One

GARLIC WORKS — JUST NOT HERE

Garlic is genuinely effective at repelling pests — not disputed. The problem is timing: garlic matures in late spring/early summer, precisely when tomatoes are ramping up their heaviest water demand.

THE CURING CONFLICT

Garlic bulb quality requires 1–2 weeks of no water while curing. This coincides with tomatoes' peak water window. In the same bed, either the garlic is poorly cured or the tomatoes are water-stressed. There's no good solution.

△ Ivy: "You will have to choose between good tomatoes and good garlic if you plant them together. A better option here is the basil or marigolds."

🧐 Ivy's Companion Planting Philosophy

Companion planting adds real value — but **only when it solves a real problem**. Ask three questions before planting:

1. Does this fix something I actually have? If aphids aren't your problem, basil won't improve your harvest.

2. Do I enjoy growing it? If you love marigolds, plant them — pollinator benefit justifies the space alone.

3. Will it create a headache? Curing conflicts, harvest timing, root crop digging — choose companions that work with your garden.

"If you like marigolds, plant them. If you don't, don't. Grow your own way!" — Ivy

✗ Companion Planting Mistakes to Avoid

- ✗ **Planting garlic next to tomatoes.** Its curing dry-spell falls exactly when tomatoes need peak water. Use basil or marigolds instead.
- ✗ **Using companions as a soil fix.** Carrots loosening soil only helps if soil is poor. Well-amended beds don't need this.
- ✗ **Crowding companions too close.** Dense planting creates shade and airflow problems — the fungal disease risk outweighs the pest benefit.
- ✗ **Relying on companions for pest control.** It's supplemental. Real pest management = regular inspection + good airflow + neem oil. Companions are a bonus, not a system.
- ✗ **Trusting social media companion lists.** The evidence is thinner than the enthusiasm. Stick to plants with a real mechanism and grow your own way.

✦ The Real Wins from Companion Planting

- ✦ **Basil alongside tomatoes** gives you aphid deterrence through scent masking — and you get to harvest fresh basil all season. Double win.
- ✦ **Marigolds attracting pollinators** is genuinely documented and benefits the entire garden. Better pollination = more fruit set.
- ✦ **Onions at the perimeter** deter insects without any management conflict. Plant, water normally, harvest when ready.
- ✦ **Mix basil + marigolds + onions** for pest deterrence, pollinator attraction, and visual appeal — all three at once, no conflicts, real kitchen upside.

📖 Related Resources in This Series

- Pest & Disease Watch Guide** — real pest identification and organic response
- Weekly Tomato Care Schedule** — what to inspect and when, season-long
- Fertilizer Recipe Cards** — DIY organic feeds that build plant resilience
- Tomato Variety Quick-Reference** — disease-resistant varieties reduce pest pressure too

All resources at DirtDivaDiaries.com · [Ripe Rewards](https://DirtDivaDiaries.com) companion series →