

## FRIENDS & FOES: DESIGNING AN EDIBLE GARDEN

Every ecosystem has limited resources to support its plant community. Plants often compete for resources like water or sunlight, and some plants have even developed tools for fighting their neighboring plants.

Plant species that actively work against each other in the environment are *antagonists*. As one example, black walnut trees release a toxic chemical into the soil around them to prevent other plants from growing nearby.

However, other species actively work together to support each other in the ecosystem. These *companion* plants might repel mutual pests, they might find or release nutrients and minerals in the soil for each other, or they might improve the size or flavor of each other's fruits.

Look over this chart from the IDEP Foundation that shows which common edible plants are companions and which edible plants are antagonists:

<https://salttree.art/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/idepcompanion.pdf>

Design an edible garden for yourself, for your family, or for your school. Choose the plants you would like to see in the garden, and determine which should be planted near to each other (as companions) and which should be kept distant from each other (as antagonists). Consider including some of the pest repellant plants from the chart.

If you need help selecting plants, start with your favorite fruits and vegetables, and then use the chart to identify their companions. You can also build a "theme" garden around a favorite food (for example, a pizza garden might include tomatoes, basil, garlic, and onions).

