



NEWSLETTER

May 2006



The weather is finally feeling more like spring – it has taken a long time to warm up this year. The hedgerows are bursting with life and unless you are very efficient gardeners, the weeds in the garden are trying to take over!

It is a shame for the school gardens that spring is so late as it means that it has been difficult to get early crops going well in order to be ready before the summer holidays. Never mind – seedlings will be getting established now and seeds can still be planted in time for a summer harvest.

The Edible Gardens in School website is now online - Please visit us!

www.ediblegardens.org.uk There are pages for teachers, pages for pupils with quizzes to test your gardening knowledge, a notice board for all your gardening questions and advice, and information about schools we have worked with. If any of you would like your school to be included on the website, please get in touch.

Are you proud of your garden and the projects you have been doing? Henry Doubleday's Schools Organic Network have a school garden competition – have a look at their website (below) for details about a competition that you can enter. Closing date 31st July 2006.



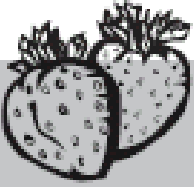
http://organicgardening.org.uk/schools_organic_network/thisweek.php

Schools we have worked with:

St John the Baptist Primary- Dartmouth
Yeo Valley Primary - Barnstaple
Ugborough Primary
Highweek Primary - Newton Abbot
Awliscombe Primary

Diptford Primary
Ilington Primary
Dartington Primary - Brimhay Nursery
Landscape Primary
St Peter's Primary - Plymouth

Burlescombe Primary
Ladysmith Middle, Exeter
Charleton Primary
Sandford Primary



HALF TERM Tips

Companion planting.

When you are planting your seeds and seedlings into the garden, perhaps consider some companion planting techniques. Companion planting is a method by which certain groups of plants are placed near each other as a way to keep pests and diseases at bay and to boost growth, without the need for chemicals.

Plants are known to influence each other in a variety of ways:

- Some have nitrogen-fixing properties whereby they make the nitrogen in the air available in the soil for other plants to use, and no plant can live without nitrogen. e.g. beans, peas.
- Some plants give off certain chemicals or scents which repel harmful pests. E.g. French Marigolds
- Certain plants attract beneficial insects which a) are predators to harmful insects or

b) aid in the pollination of plants. e.g. parsley, borage.

- Some plants attract harmful insects and therefore keep them away from the main crops. E.g. nasturtiums.
- As plants are different sizes and have different needs, plants can be placed in such a way so that a sun loving plant will provide shade to a shade loving one, a tall plant will provide a strong stem for a climbing plant to hold on to or a low spreading plant will act as a ground cover to protect the soil from drying out.
- Similarly, some plants may exert a negative influence on their neighbours; their root areas may compete with each other; one may shade another which needs sun; some may produce an acid which is harmful to others. (e.g. walnut trees)

The Three Sisters

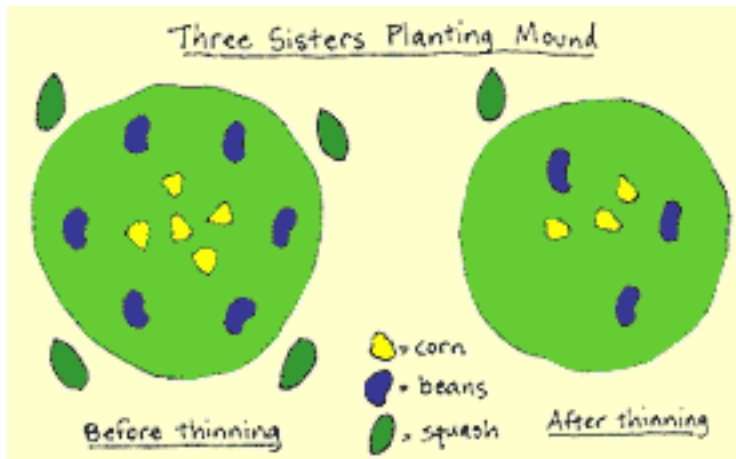
One good companion planting group is the Three Sisters. This planting trilogy includes beans, sweetcorn and squash and is a traditional Native American crop group. The beans provide (or 'fix') nitrogen in the air to the soil through the nodules on their roots, the sweetcorn provides a stake for the beans to climb and the squash acts as a ground cover to protect the soil from drying out. In Native American legends, these three crops were called the Three Sisters as the plants were like sisters who couldn't live apart and who always helped each other out.





The traditional way of planting the crops is to create a mound of soil about 12 inches high and between 18 inches and 3 feet in diameter. If you have several mounds, they should be 3 or 4 feet apart in all directions. Sow 6 corn seeds around the centre of each mound. You need to thin these out to 3 or 4 seedlings when they grow - choose the biggest to keep! After a couple of weeks, when the corn is about 4 inches high, sow 2 or 3 beans around each corn plant. At the same time, sow 2-3 squash seeds next to the mound, about a foot away from the beans, and thin to 1 plant when they start growing.

As the plants grow, the beans can be encouraged to climb up the corn and the squash vines can be gently directed around the base of the bean and corn to cover the soil. Notice which way the beans climb!



Perhaps you could find out other companion planting groups, or find out more information about the myth of the three sisters.

Try these websites for more information.

<http://www.kidsgardening.com/growingideas/projects/mar03/pg1.html> - explanation of companion planting and ideas for other activities

<http://www.gardentoad.com/companionplants.html> - nice explanation of companion planting and a list of plants and companions.

<http://www.winnipeg.ca/cms/bugline/companion/default.stm> - explanation of companion planting and list of plants

<http://www.oneida-nation.net/food-index.html> - a good explanation of the three sisters.

<http://www.oneida-nation.net/FRAMESfood.html> - includes many recipes using 3 sisters crops.

<http://www.kidsgardening.com> - This site has good information about the three sisters, including planting guide and other related activities.



SCHOOLS NEWS

St Peter's Primary

EGS has started work in St Peter's School in Plymouth this term. We will be going to St Peter's on an almost weekly basis during this term to work with a class in the garden. They have 2 nice courtyard areas which have been growing vegetables and flowers for the last 3 years and this year we will also be using 3 raised beds in a lovely area at the side of the school which has been landscaped by the woodland trust.

Awliscombe Primary

In March EGS worked with Awliscombe school near Honiton to clear and prepare 2 raised beds that they already had, but which were full of weeds, and to build another raised bed next to them. We also sowed carrot and cabbage seeds and made an area for composting. The school will be continuing the sowing and planting this term. They also hope to grow potatoes, which they were planning to plant in tyre stacks or in large plastic sacks, to save space in the beds for other vegetables.

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www.naturesave.co.uk

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