

Companion Plants for Roses

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Rarely in nature do we find only one species of plant growing by itself. Yet a drive through any residential neighborhood reveals that we tend to plant roses by themselves ... in the designated “Rose Bed”.

Roses are healthier in our urban landscapes when we mimic nature and provide them with companion plants. Companion plants in your rose bed can help control “bad bugs” by encouraging “beneficial insects” to take up residence.

Does this mean you have to give up the formal, symmetrical appearance you really enjoy for the cottage, Monet inspired look in your garden? Not at all. That’s the beauty of roses. With so many types of roses and a multitude of companion plants to pair them with, you are sure to find several combinations that will enhance your landscape and please your eye.

In selecting companion plants, choose those that have the same growing requirements as your roses. Roses do best in full sun and well drained soil. Once established, roses have medium to low water needs - watering deeply every one to two weeks. Regular fertilization will keep them healthy and producing blooms during their season. The companion plants should tolerate a very similar water, fertilizer, and pesticide schedule that you normally use on the roses. Other “housekeeping issues” to remember: Companion plants should be planted at least a foot away from rose bushes so that the rose’s roots are not disturbed and to allow access to each plant. Prune your roses creating an open structure; maintaining good air circulation around all plants will help prevent attacks from insects and diseases.

Now for the fun! Create a planting diagram for your beds but embrace the trial and error factor. The internet is a great resource for ideas and pictures of Companion Plants for Roses. The following list comes from Master Gardener experience and from several sites on the internet. All are suitable for the Sunset 8 and 9 climate zones. **Be sure to look up and familiarize yourself with the plant(s) before you purchase.**

Companion plants for roses:

Shrubs

Blue mist shrub (*Caryopteris*)
Boxwood (*Buxus*)

Daphnes (*Daphne*)
Red-twig dogwood (*Cornus*)

Smokebush (*Cotinus*)
Spirea (*Spiraea*)

Perennials

Anise-hyssop (*Agastache*)
Bellflower (*Campanula*)
Catmint (*Nepeta*)
Blue false-indigo (*Baptisia*)
Garden phlox (*Phlox*)
Globe thistle (*Echinops*)
Geraniums (*Geranium*)

Germander (*Teucrium*)
Lady’s mantle (*Alchemilla*)
Lavender (*Lavandula*)
Lilies (*Lilium*)
Meadow sage (*Salvia*)
Ornamental onions (*Allium*)
Red-hot poker (*Kniphofia*)

Russian-sage (*Perovskia*)
Sea-holly (*Eryngium*)
Spurge (*Euphorbia*)
Wormwood (*Artemisia*)
Yarrow (*Achillea*)

Annuals

Annual phlox (*Phlox*)
Heliotrope (*Heliotropium*)
Lantana (*Lantana*)

Larkspur (*Consolida*)
Million bells (*Calibrachoa*)
Pansies (*Viola*)

Persian shield (*Strobilanthes*)
Flowering tobacco
(*Nicotiana*)

Companion plants for roses - Grouped by Color:

Blue or Purple

Allium azureum
Asperula orientalis
Campanula 'Brantwood'
Campanula 'Telham Beauty'
Campanula rotundifolia
Centaurea cyanus
Cleome 'Violet Queen'
Cynoglossum amabile
Delphinium & Larkspur
Geranium 'Brookside'
Hesperis matronalis 'Violet'
Lavander 'Lady'
Malva 'Zebrina'
Nepeta 'Blue Infinity'
Nigella- Love in a Mist
Penstemon strictus
Salvia 'Blue Spires'
Sweet Pea 'Flora Norton'
Verbena

Purplish-Pink

Cleome 'Cherry Queen'
Cosmos 'Daydream'
Cosmos 'Double Click'
Dianthus carthusianorum
Digitalis 'Glittering Prizes'
Gypsophila pacifica
Lavatera 'Pink Beauty'
Malope 'Vulcan'
Lychnis 'Angel's Blush'
Nicotiana mutabilis
Salvia 'Rose Queen'

Sweet Pea 'Janet Scott'

Salmon-Pink

Digitalis mertonensis
Lavatera 'Silver Cup'
Lychnis 'Dusky Salmon'
Poppy 'Coral Reef'
Salvia 'Coral Nymph'
Sweet Pea 'Miss Willmott'

Crimson Red

Cosmos 'Tet Versailles Red'
Dianthus barbatus 'Ruby Moon'
Knautia macedonica-similar to scabiosa
Lychnis coronaria - rose champion

Scarlet Red

Geum chiloense
Lychnis chalcedonica
Papaver rhoeas
Penstemon 'Iron Maiden'
Salvia 'Lady in Red'

Gold & Orange

Calendula
Coreopsis 'Sunray'
Cosmos 'Bright Lights'
Eschscholzia californica -
Poppy 'Double Tangerine Gem'

Yellow

Antirrhinum braun-blanquettii

Coreopsis 'Moonbeam'
Digitalis grandiflora
Geum 'Lady Stratheden'
Lilies (a variety of colors)

White

Alyssum 'Carpet of Snow'
Campanula persicifolia 'Alba'
Cleome 'Helen Campbell'
Cosmos 'Psyche White'
Cosmos 'Purity'
Cosmos 'Sonata White'
Digitalis purpurea 'Alba'
Feverfew
Hesperis matronalis 'Alba'
Lavatera 'Mont Blanc'
Lychnis coronaria 'Alba'
Mirabilis jalapa 'Alba'
Nicotiana alata
Shasta Daisy
Valerian

Unusual Colors and Foliage Plants

Agastache 'Golden Jubilee'
Bronze Fennel
Bupleurum rotundifolium
Digitalis 'Silver Fox'
Digitalis trojana
Eryngium 'Miss Willmott's Ghost'
Mexican Feather Grass
Nicotiana langsdorfii
Ruta graveolens
Salvia argentea

Some Website Reading and Resources

- "In Good Company: Companion Planting for Roses" By Sonia Uytterhoven and the New York Botanical Garden. http://gardening.about.com/od/rose1/a/Rose_Companions.htm
- "Companion Plants add beauty to rose beds" By Karen Dardick. Published in the San Diego Union-Tribune on April 15, 2007. <http://www.signonsandiego.com>
- "Companion Plants for Roses" By Charity Armstrong, BellaOnline Roses Editor. <http://www.bellaonline.com>
- "Companion Plants for Roses" By Diane Linsley <http://dianeseeds.com>
- Gardening Q & A "Companion Plants and Roses" <http://www.hgtv.com>
- "The Holistic Gardening Series: Companion Plants" By Marilyn K. Burnes <http://gardengal.net/holistic.html>

This information courtesy of:

University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Tulare-Kings Co.

Have a gardening question? The UC Master Gardeners offer free information on gardening

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