

## **Planning Your Garden**

Small gardens require vegetables to be planted close together, so making sure they get along is essential. Even in larger gardens, spacing your plants is extremely important because of water, nutrient and pest control. According to Duane Newcomb, author of "The Backyard Vegetable Factory," conventional advice is based on science, but trial and error or experimentation often yields the best result. Depending on the size of your garden or container and the list of vegetables you want to plant, you may have to experiment a little to know exactly which ones make good neighbors.

## **Bad Plant Combinations**

Plants release varying amounts of compounds, such as nitrogen and potassium, which can stunt the growth of other plants by altering the pH level of the soil. While cucumbers thrive when planted near bush beans, lettuce and radishes, they choke when planted near potatoes. Beans, beets, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, corn, cucumbers and strawberries make good neighbors -- as long as you plant the onions, garlic, leeks and shallots elsewhere. Peppers do well with carrots, eggplant, onions, parsley and tomatoes, but do not plant kohlrabi anywhere near them. Keep lettuce away from cabbage and keep onions away from asparagus, beans and peas. Spinach gets along with everyone.

## **Cross-Contamination**

Another reason to keep selected vegetable plants separate is because of common pests, fungal and bacterial infections and parasites, which can easily spread from one plant to another. Keep corn and tomatoes separate because they are both prone to a common fungal infection. This way, if your tomatoes become infected, it will not take down your corn crop. The same holds true for potatoes and tomatoes and peppers and potatoes. Keep these plants on opposite sides of your garden.