

## PLANNING FOR NEXT YEAR

While you can still remember where you planted crops this year, document it. That is, get a notebook and make a rough map of your garden. You need to rotate your crops, and this map will remind you which plants were where.

These suggestions are not scientifically proven, but gardeners who use them say they work.

Plant your cabbage family where the onions were last year. This will thwart the parasites and pests that trouble cabbages. Follow squash, pumpkins and other vine crops with root vegetables like carrots. Vines have a tendency to smother weeds, especially if they have been mulched. This will make it easier for you to find your beets and parsnips. Till in the cabbage family and plant the nightshade family in that area next spring. The residues help rid the soil of the pathogens that attack your tomatoes, potatoes and eggplant. Plant the leafy crew, lettuce, spinach and other plants in that family the year after root crops. Carrots and parsnips will loosen soil making it easier for this family to penetrate the soil. Corn should follow beans and peas. These 2 make their own nitrogen. Till them under when they are harvested. A caveat, vines are hard to till in as they like to wrap themselves around the tiller tines causing the tiller operator to warm the air with his vocalizations. Plant spuds after corn and you will have a heavier yield. Start saving your banana skins. Run them through the blender. Pour the thawed goop under your tomatoes when you plant them. cover with soil first. This is supposed to be good for roses too. Can't hurt. Just be sure you label it for the garden. Hubby might think bananas on ice cream sounds pretty good. Banana skins, not so much.

Planting marigolds with the thought that their roots deter nematodes is an old wives tale. However, do plant daisy type flowers in the garden, They attract pests away from your vegetables. Dill will attract ladybugs. They will lay their eggs on their heads. The larvae will gobble many pests, especially aphids. A row of flowers, especially flat-faced ones in the garden, will attract bees and other pollinators and make the garden prettier at the same time.

Don't throw those leaves away. If you can't pile them somewhere, bag them up. They make perfect mulch in the garden. Mulch not only cuts down the weeds, it also helps keep the soil cooler and helps keep the moisture from evaporating as rapidly. If we get heavy rains (please), mulch keeps them from packing the soil down. It keeps the gardener's feet clean, no dirt on the lettuce, no soil diseases splashed on your tomatoes to give them blight, and best of all, as they rot, they feed all the critters that live in the soil. If your soil is active, by July you will start to see bare spots in the mulch. Just add more.

To make your mulch even more successful, lay 4 to 6 sheets of damp newspaper or garden paper on the soil then cover with leaves. Dry paper and a bit of wind may result in papering your neighbor's house. Choose a still day. This combination, of paper and mulch, is especially important for tomatoes. Any wound on your baby tomato that gets splashed with soil can lead to disease. Most of the plant diseases are in the soil just waiting for an opening to infect a plant. By fall, you will find that there is very little paper or leaves to till in. The soil 'ate' it all.

Bev Johnson Master Gardener.