

## Fruit and nut tree companioning

companion orcharding is great, Mike. You don't have to stop with just cover crops and weed companioning, either. I've seen beautiful productive orchards with garden rows between the fruit and nut trees. The veggies and herbs between the rows were on soaker hoses, which would branch out to a drip fixture to each tree, and there were cover crops underneath the trees. The single row was narrow enough to reach to the middle from both sides, and raised a bit, making it easier to tend. Many of their herbs and veggies were allowed to bolt and set seed, providing plenty of space for beneficials, along with the clover and vetch under the trees.

Tansy (if you surround the tansy plants with yarrow plants, they tend to duke it out between themselves and don't seem so invasive elsewhere), pennyroyal, horehound, nasturtiums, chives, mint, marigolds, angelica, chamomile, elderberries (great companion for peaches, nectarines, apricots, cherries...etc...), comfrey and stinging nettle (chop some up and make a tea from them and you have an excellent calcium foliar spray which also deters insects. Also, comfrey can be planted as a border around gardens or orchards as an excellent fire barrier, or barrier against a very invasive noxious weed), lupines (around apple trees), horseradish (helps combat fungal problems), clover (great trap crop for woolly aphid), hot peppers, rue, and asparagus plant around the base of trees to deter climbing borers).

Strawberries, especially the wild northern strawberries, make a great groundcover around the base of trees, and are edible, too. Planting understory fruit and nut bushes, like currants, blueberries, lingonberries, huckleberries, gooseberries, hazelnuts, quince, aronia, amelanchier, or ribes, on to three bushes per two trees is another way of companioning your fruit trees.

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With all those fruit and nut trees, make sure to interplant the occasional black locust, especially if you are going to plant walnut, butternut, or any other nut with juglone. A border of black locust around the nut trees will help the growth and production of the nut trees, AND provide a barrier between the juglone producing plants and other plants which might not do well under their influence.

Don't forget the ANIMAL companions to fruit trees! Keeping chickens and/or ducks or guinea fowl around the trees helps to keep the insect and weed population at bay. Since keeping tall plants away from the trunks is advisable, a portable pen keeping the poultry around the trunks of the trees where they can scratch and shred the weeds looking for bugs is a great idea. Even varmints like rabbits and guinea pigs can nibble around at the greens at the base of the tree, and provide an all natural fertilizer in the process. Most importantly, however, an integrated orchard is ideal for beehives!

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