

**BASIL:** Plant with tomatoes to improve growth and flavor. Basil can be helpful in repelling thrips. It is said to repel flies and mosquitoes. Do not plant near rue.

**BAY LEAF:** A fresh leaf bay leaf in each storage container of beans or grains will deter weevils and moths. Sprinkle dried leaves with other deterrent herbs in garden as natural insecticide dust. A good combo: Bay leaves, cayenne pepper, tansy and peppermint. For ladybug invasions try spreading bay leaves around in your house anywhere they are getting in and they should leave.

**BEANS:** All bean enrich the soil with nitrogen fixed from the air. In general they are good company for carrots, brassicas, beets, and cucumbers. Great for heavy nitrogen users like corn and grain plants. French Haricot beans, sweet corn and melons are a good combo. Keep beans away from the alliums.

**BEE BALM (Oswego, Monarda):** Plant with tomatoes to improve growth and flavor. Great for attracting beneficials and bees of course. Pretty perennial that tends to get powdery mildew.

**BEET:** Good for adding minerals to the soil. The leaves are composed of 25% magnesium. Companions are lettuce, onions and brassicas.

**BORAGE:** Companion plant for tomatoes, squash and strawberries. Deters tomato hornworms and cabbage worms. One of the best bee and wasp attracting plants. Adds trace minerals to the soil and a good addition to the compost pile. Borage may benefit any plant it is growing next to via increasing resistance to pests and disease. After you have planted this annual once it will self seed.

**BRASSICA:** Benefit from chamomile, peppermint, dill, sage, and rosemary. They need rich soil with plenty of lime to flourish.

BUCKWHEAT: Accumulates calcium and can be grown as an excellent cover crop. Attracts hoverflies in droves. (Member of the brassica family.)

CARAWAY: Good for loosening compacted soil with it's deep roots. Tricky to establish. The flowers attract a number of beneficial insects.

CATNIP: Deters flea beetles, aphids, Japanese beetles, squash bugs, ants and weevils. Use sprigs of mint anywhere in the house you want deter mice and ants. Smells good and very safe.

CHAMOMILE, GERMAN: Annual. Improves flavor of cabbages, cucumbers and onions. Host to hoverflies and wasps. Accumulates calcium, potassium and sulfur, later returning them to the soil. Increases oil production from herbs. Leave some flowers unpicked and German chamomile will reseed itself. Roman chamomile is a low growing perennial that will tolerate almost any soil conditions. Both like full sun. Growing chamomile of any type is considered a tonic for anything you grow in the garden.

CHERVIL: Companion to radishes for improved growth and flavor. Keeps aphids off lettuce. Likes shade.

CHIVES: Improves growth and flavor of carrots and tomatoes . Chives may drive away Japanese beetles and carrot rust fly. Planted among apple trees it may help prevent scab. A tea of chives may be used on cucumbers to prevent downy mildew.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS: *C. coccineum* kills root nematodes. (the bad ones) It's flowers along with those of *C. cinerariaefolium* have been used as botanical pesticides for centuries. (i.e. pyrethrum) White flowering chrysanthemums repel Japanese beetles.

CLOVER: Long used as a green manure and plant companion. Attracts

many beneficials. Useful planted around apple trees to attract predators of the woolly aphid.

COMFREY: Accumulates calcium, phosphorous and potassium. Likes wet spots to grow in. Traditional medicinal plant. Good trap crop for slugs.

Comfrey while useful as a slug trap has many other qualities you may find of value. It is a very hardy perennial. It will grow in moist areas and has the ability to clean and extract nutrients from stagnant or foul water. It sends down long tap roots that can go as deep as 10 feet enabling it to accumulate minerals in its' leaves. These minerals include potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron and phosphorus along with vitamins A, C, and B-12. The leaves contain tons of protein as previously mentioned. When comfrey leaves are composted and returned to enrich the soil all these elements are made available to your plants.

Medicinal qualities: Comfrey has many healing properties to it. Briefly the roots and leaves contain allantoin. Allantoin is a protein with hormonal like qualities to it that stimulate cell proliferation. It is the allantoin that gives comfrey its' reputation for healing wounds, broken bones, burns, sprains, sore joints, dry skin and for reducing the swelling associated with fractures. Fresh, clean comfrey leaves can be used in a poultice to treat these injuries. Comfrey salves are readily available from health food stores. It is not recommended to take comfrey internally as liver damage has been known to occur from extended ingestion. Topical use is safe as the alkaloids will not penetrate the skin.

Comfrey fertilizer: With its' high levels of potash comfrey tea can be used as an excellent fertilizer for tomato, pepper, cucumber and potato plants. The smell while it is "cooking" is strong. Pick a good sized handful of leaves. Place them in a container with enough water

to cover the leaves. Cover and let this cook for 4 weeks in cool weather or 2 weeks in hot weather. Then squeeze the leaves to extract as much juice as possible Strain and use at a rate of 1/3 cup of comfrey juice to one gallon of water Use as a foliar feed and soil drench around the plants. Put the solid wastes into the compost pile.

Dried or fresh comfrey leaves have the following percentages of NPK:

Nitrogen: 0.75% Phosphorous: 0.25% Potash: 0.2%

Culture:

Light: Full sun with some types accepting partial shade.

Soil: Preferably nitrogen rich with a fairly neutral pH.

Planting: Set plants 2 feet apart in an area where you can spare the space for them. Once you have planted comfrey it is there to stay.

Feeding: For plants that are harvested often do keep them well fed.

Disease: Comfrey Rust (*Melampsorella symphyti*) is the biggest problem with comfrey. If you see rust starting immediately remove any infested leaves and destroy. Give the plants a good dose of potassium like some wood ashes. Follow with a good organic fertilizer. Allow ample space for air movement among the plants.

There are some different varieties of comfrey available:

Common comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)

The most widely used comfrey with clusters of bell-shaped flowers in white, purple, mauve or rose. This is the most invasive variety of comfrey.

Russian comfrey (*S.x uplandicum*)

Russian comfrees have the highest levels of protein and allantoin.

Bocking No. 4: Grown generally as a fodder for poultry.

Bocking No. 14: This type has the most allantoin and is said to be the least invasive. We have been told that Bocking No. 14 will pretty much stay where you put it. This would make it the best choice for

the home gardener. It does show a good resistance to rust which is often a problem with comfreys and it can tolerate a low level of the disease without harming the plants growth.

#### Ornamental comfreys

Creeping comfrey (*S. grandiflorum*): A low maintenance groundcover with light yellow flowers and crinkly leaves. Will tolerate shade and chokes out the weeds. May be a good choice for the north side of a wall or house.

Goldsmith comfrey (*S. grandiflorum* "Goldsmith"): Another less invasive type with light yellow flowers and variegated leaves. Grows to 12 inches in height.

Red comfrey (*S. officinale* "Rubrum"): Red flowers, wow! Will also grow in shade and has a compact growth habit.  
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