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## **1. SINGLE PLANTING**

This is the simplest style of planting. Essentially one crop is grown per year. Next year, a different crop will be planted in that location. Many farms work this way, for example most of the Midwest grows corn followed by soybeans the next year.

### **Advantages**

Simple, easy to implement, more free time between crops. Everything harvested at once. Best suited for large farms.

### **Disadvantages**

Makes poor use of limited space. Gives weeds plenty of opportunity to grow where there is no competition. Makes maintaining beneficial insect populations harder.

## **2. STAGGERED PLANTING**

For crops that are harvested all at once or have a small harvest season like sweet corn, planting a portion of the crop every few weeks will allow the harvest season to be extended. Very important with home garden harvest of leafy greens. You will have to still rotate with different crop.

### **Advantages**

Extends the harvest season as compared to a single planting. Potentially less risk of total crop failure.

### **Disadvantages**

Harvest at tail ends of season may be reduced as part of the season will likely be less than optimal. Requires better planning. Crop will be harvested over an extended time -- which is probably what you want.

## **3. SUCCESSION PLANTING**

Succession planting is a technique that aims to keep something planted throughout the growing season by planting a new crop that fits into the coming growing conditions immediately after harvesting another. For example, radishes planted in spring may be followed by squash which might then be followed with garlic planted in fall.

### **Advantages**

Maximizes the use of space in the garden. Minimizes opportunity for weeds to grow. Encourages beneficial insect populations. Continuous rotation benefits soil. Easy to incorporate cover crops.

### **Disadvantages**

Requires excellent planning and experience with plants' growing needs and space requirements. Easy to over-plant or use incompatible plants. Usually requires good quality, fertile soil. Tillage is requires more care in a tight space to avoid damaging existing plants.

## **4. COMPANION PLANTING / INTERCROPPING**

Companion planting (also called intercropping) is the act of growing more than 1 crop in the same area at the time. A common example is carrots with tomatoes. Tomatoes will be planted while carrots are already in the ground. The carrots will be harvested before the tomato vines are removed. There are dozens of examples. Many involve herbs. To do this, plants must be compatible: they must require similar growing conditions and be complementary in terms of space and nutrient use.

### **Advantages**

Great use of space. Maximizes beneficial insects' opportunity to help keep pests at bay. More competition for weeds so they grow less aggressively.

### **Disadvantages**

It can be hard to know what plants work together and there is not a lot of research-based recommendations on combinations. This requires some reliance on personal experience or advice from other local gardeners. There are many books on companion planting that may help. Tillage requires great care. This is really only suitable in raised beds.

## **FEW GARDENS USE ONLY ONE SYSTEM**

Most gardens will have a combination of the 4 planting styles in use. As an example, there may be lettuce stagger planted over 6 weeks. Once the whole crop is harvested perhaps it would be followed by squash. When squash is harvested, the soil could be tilled or amended with a single-planted fall cover crop sown in September. Every garden will be different.

The most important factor in getting gardens with more than more than a single crop to work is good planning. Winter is an excellent time to work on planning.

## **ALWAYS ROTATE CROPS**

Crop rotation has been practiced in some form for centuries. Growing the same crop repeatedly depletes the soil of the nutrients that crop needs most and builds up diseases and pests. By rotating crops pest and disease cycles are broken and nutrients can be used more effectively. Some plants, such as legumes, even add nutrients to the soil.

As a rule, closely related plants should not follow each other. Tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and potatoes are all in the same family and get similar pests. They should be followed with something completely unrelated. Most sources recommend rotating crops based on plant families.

Skipping a season with a crop is better than not rotating at all, but it is better to use a 3-year or longer rotation with crops in the garden. A winter cover crop can help fill this need and improve your soil as it is incorporated into the soil as a green manure. There are many references that explain crop rotations.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Contact your local Master Gardener help line or UC Cooperative Extension office.

In Inyo and Mono counties call (760) 872-2098 for more information on planting gardens.