

Growing Point

Garden lessons in the Bible

Week 4: Planting Companions

*Ruth said to Naomi: Where you go, I go; where you live I'll live.
Your people are my people; your God is my God.
- Ruth 1: 16 The Message*

Companion means friend. Our Bible verse for today comes from a conversation between two companions in the Old Testament – Naomi and Ruth. They were from different countries, but they had one person in common – Ruth had married Naomi's son. Eventually, the son/husband died. Naomi decided that she should return to her own country to be close to her relatives. She had assumed that Ruth would stay behind in her own country. But, instead, she was a loyal companion and said, "Where you go, I go; where you live I'll live. Your people are my people; your God is my God."

Just as people can be companions, garden plants can be companions too. In the garden, some plants grow well next to each other and others do not. Plants that like similar things grow best in similar conditions so they are typically found together – sun/shade, moister/drier soil. Because they do best in similar growing conditions, they are found growing together and are sometimes called companion plants. Other times plants are companions because they help each other out – one might provide shade for the other, or one might add a nutrient to the soil that the other needs. Sometimes plants rely on a particular insect or bird to pollinate their flowers.

Soul Water

Nurturing your soul through prayer

Week 4: Planting Companions

Dear Companion God,

Help me to observe the plants around me closely.

Help me to learn which ones are companions - which ones like to grow next to each other, and which ones help each other out.

Help me be a good companion to other people.

Help me to learn from Naomi and Ruth about being loyal, supportive and helpful to my companions.

Amen

Ideas

- Keep this prayer on your dinner table and say together before you eat this week.
- Use this prayer in conjunction with bedtime prayers.
- If you have a garden at home, share this prayer before you work in your garden together.
- Write your own prayers about companions.

Earth Explorations

Nurturing Connections to the Soil

Week 4: Planting Companions

In our gardens, we take charge of companion planting. We make decisions about what plants to plant together. In natural communities, plants have companions too. So, we have woods, prairies, marshes and other ecological communities. In these cases, nature decides, rather than people, what plants will be companions.

Take a field trip to a woods, a prairie, and a marsh. Observe the plants that grow in each area.

Do some plants grow in all three communities?

Can you find any plants that tend to grow next to another particular plant?

Do you have any ideas why these plants like to grow together?

Did you find any trees in the prairie? Why/why not?

Did you find any cattails in the woods? Why/why not?

Need ideas of where to find a woods, prairie, and marsh to visit?

- UW-Arboretum
uwarboretum.org
- Aldo Leopold Nature Center
www.naturenet.com/alnc
- Owen Nature Conservancy
www.ci.madison.wi.us/parks/owenpark.html

Seeds for Thought

Additional Resources to Nurture Soil & Soul

Week 4: Planting Companions

Questions to Ponder

- What does it mean to you to be a loyal companion?
- If you were to be planted next to someone so that you could take care of each other, who would you want to be planted next to?
- What would you offer the other person as a way of taking care of them?
- Can plants that grow as companions teach us anything about being good friends to other people?
- What do Ruth and Naomi teach you about being loyal companions?
- Plants can't move themselves around, but people can. We can choose where to be, and therefore we can choose our companions. Who are your companions? What do you learn from each other? How do you help each other?
- Can you remember a time that a companion helped you out?
- In what ways is God your companion?

Sunflower Seed Nutrition

[Source: National Sunflower Association]

Protein supplies amino acids, the building blocks that build, maintain and repair body tissues.

- Sunflower seeds are a good source of plant protein, providing 6 grams or **12% of the Daily Value** per ounce.

Vitamin E is an antioxidant that may protect against heart disease by getting rid of harmful molecules called free radicals that can lead to atherosclerosis. *Sunflower seeds are the best whole food source of vitamin E.*

- Sunflower seeds are an excellent source of vitamin E. Just one ounce of sunflower seeds provides **76% of the Recommended Dietary Allowance** for vitamin E.

Folate, a B vitamin, plays an essential role in making new body cells by helping to form the DNA and RNA that contain each cell's "master plan" for reproduction. This is why folate is so important for pregnant women and the development of babies. Folate also pairs with vitamin B-12 to help form hemoglobin in red blood cells, which allows them to carry optimal amounts of oxygen. Folate is involved in the removal of homocysteine, an amino acid thought to promote heart disease, from the blood. A large population study from Harvard University shows an association between higher intakes of folate and lower risk of heart disease.

- Sunflower seeds are a good source of folate, supplying **17% of the Daily Value** in a one-ounce serving.

Other **B vitamins** are essential for producing energy from food.

- A one-ounce serving of sunflower seeds contains **20% of the Daily Value** for pantothenic acid, **11%** for vitamin B6, **6%** for thiamin and **6%** for niacin.

Tips for Everyday Living

- Sprinkle sunflower seeds on your salad for extra nutrition and crunch.
- Add some sunflower seeds to your hot or cold cereal.
- Use sunflower seeds in baking breads, snacks, and desserts
- Visit www.sunflowernsa.com for recipes