

Is Garden Crop Rotation Necessary

by Kris Hart

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Do I rotate garden crops? Absolutely not. In fact, there are a few things I intentionally plant in the exact same place, year after year (tomatoes, melons, garlic, onions). I tend to plant where I think things will benefit each other, look beautiful, and where it's convenient. I look toward nature and see how things happen there. Nature doesn't rotate

its crops. The wild berries, herbs, mushrooms, and fruiting trees drop their seeds and spread their roots right where they are and the plants' protegee stay and return year after year in the same location and have no trouble whatsoever bearing good fruit without rotation. I have found that I don't need to either.

Are you familiar with “Back to Eden” gardening? There are entire documentaries on it. It's wonderful and fascinating! Since the beginning of time, nature has been growing and replenishing itself in a manner that BUILDS soil. Why is it that we can't seem to keep a healthy layer of topsoil? Because we have been taught that we have to till, use pest/weed chemistry, and constantly rotate our crops. We have to rotate our crops BECAUSE we have been taught to till and because we have been taught that nothing should live in our gardens except for our chosen plants. These practices deplete the soil of its components and life. That's not how nature was designed to work.

With “Back to Eden” Gardening, there is no tilling. We compost and mulch instead of till. The focus is the ecosystem and, more specifically, soil health rather than harvest. When you focus on the soil health, the harvest comes. Healthy soil produces healthy plants, and healthy plants produce an abundant harvest. I not only find that I get a strong harvest but each year I also have fewer pest problems (I only had three hornworms on my 30 tomato plants this year) and I find that I can grow my plants in the same place, year after year.

When you focus on keeping your soil healthy, the nutrition is there that all of your plants require because the soil life is there. Healthy soil needs organic matter, bugs, worms, beneficial bacteria, and fungi. Our soil stays soft and doesn't require tiling because we add two inches of compost in the fall every year. It doesn't dry out and get compacted or overrun with weeds because we mulch with wood chips after we compost, mimicking what nature does. We see fewer pests each year because we are producing stronger plants while inviting nature to bring its beneficial bugs to eat the harmful ones.

My garden is teeming with life and I am certain that this was the original plan and this is why I am able to grow a productive garden without harsh chemicals. Each year it gets a little bit easier.

They say that over the course of seven years, your garden ecosystem will balance out and become fairly self maintaining.

Get out there and get your hands dirty! And please feel free to share your experience and tips on my Instagram or Facebook page @BottomViewFarmIL.

Kris Hart lives in Litchfield and has a small hobby farm making strides towards sustainable living and organic/heirloom gardening. Contact her at kris.hart17@yahoo.com or find Bottom View Farm on Facebook and Instagram.

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