

## **Summer Gardens**

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As we move into summer, we need to start growing plants that can withstand our extreme heat. We also need to look at shade requirements and companion planting for a great summer garden.

Shade is one of the most critical elements of summer gardening. Like people, plants also need a break from the hot midday sun and the afternoon shade is a must for almost any summer garden.

I prefer to use trees that will lose their leaves during the winter and grow quickly in the summer. One of my favorites is the mesquite tree -- they are durable and their protective thorns make them very attractive to birds. By pruning these trees high, I can produce a canopy that allows for raised beds underneath.

I use different types of vegetables that work well together as companion plants. Corn squash, gourds, eggplants, peppers, sunflowers, cosmos and melons work well together. The corn and sunflowers supply additional shade for the eggplants and peppers while the melons, gourds and squash act as a living mulch, reducing soil temperature and evaporation.

Stay away from synthetic fertilizers and pesticides and encourage biodiversity around the base of the garden with cosmos, marigolds and other flowers. This biodiversity will attract beneficial insects that will control pest insects.

I foliar feed my plants with a combination of humic acid, fish emulsion and liquid seaweed or my Extreme Juice. This combination will reduce weed growth, heat resistance and build up microbotic activity, which will increase the fertility of the soil.