

Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 141 Companion Planting Veggies and Flowers with Lisa Ziegler

Show Notes are at: www.LivingHomegrown.com/141

Theresa: This is the Living Homegrown Podcast, Episode 141.

Announcer: Welcome to the Living Homegrown Podcast, where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm. To help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, National PBS TV producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.

Theresa: Hey there, everybody. Welcome to the podcast. I'm your host, Theresa Loe, and this podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without a farm, which includes organic small-space food gardening, canning, and fermenting the harvest and artisan food crafts like baking your own bread. It's all about the different ways that we can live closer to our food and take small, delicious steps towards living a more sustainable lifestyle. If you want to learn more about any of these topics or my online courses, my coaching, or my Living Homegrown membership, just visit my website, livinghomegrown.com.

Theresa: On today's episode, we're going to dive into growing vegetables and flowers together. In other words, we're going to be talking about companion planting. Now a lot of people love to grow vegetables and then other people love to grow flowers, and we're talking about marrying the two together and why it's so, so important.

Theresa: Now I have to tell you that when I was a beginner gardener, I totally stumbled upon this because I had no choice. I loved both. I loved vegetables and I loved flowers, and I have a very tiny space in which to grow my garden. When we bought our home and we started growing our vegetables, I was inter-planting flowers right along with them because I wanted to have flowers to bring into the house. I wanted to enjoy them.

Theresa: I love fresh cut flowers, and I wanted to have tomatoes and peppers and herbs alongside of them, so I combined the two together. I also wanted just to have the beauty of flowers mixed in with my vegetables. In fact, there's areas of my yard where people don't realize it's an edible garden because I have edible flowers mixed in with vegetables that you would never even realize it's a vegetable. So by doing this, I immediately saw that there were way more benefits than just the beauty that you get by mixing the two together, and that's what we're going to talk about in today's episode.

Theresa: To dive into this subject today, I brought on author Lisa Ziegler. Now Lisa has written several books. She's written *Cool Flowers*. She's written a great guide called *Easy Cut-Flower Garden*, and she has this new book out called *Vegetables Love Flowers: Companion Planting for Beauty and Bounty*. Let me tell you a little bit more about Lisa.

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- Theresa: Lisa Ziegler is a cut-flower farmer, an author, and a nationally recognized speaker on organic gardening. Farming since 1998, her small urban farm in Southeast Virginia produces thousands of stems of flowers and an abundance of vegetables each week in season. Lisa gathers experiences from day-to-day life on her farm. She hosts on farm workshops and travels around speaking and teaching on the good life of urban farming.
- Theresa: But I want you to know that we have in the show notes for today's episode links to Lisa's website and all of her books and any extra information that we cover on today's podcast. To get to the show notes, you go to livinghomegrown.com/141. Now I want you to take special note of that because Lisa has something kind of special going on right now at the time that this podcast comes out. Her book is just coming out, the *Vegetables Love Flowers*, where she's specifically talking about growing vegetables and flowers together.
- Theresa: You'll see in today's podcast, there's more to it than just throwing a few seeds out there, and she gives some really great information in the book. But at the time of this particular episode being released, Lisa also has a virtual online book study. What that is, is if you buy the book, then she has weekly lessons. They're videos that go along with each chapter of the book, and the book study is free. If you get the book, you can go through getting lessons from Lisa on the different chapters. Really clever, so I wanted to make sure you guys knew about that.
- Theresa: Now some of the things that we talk about in this episode is not only just the benefits that you can get from combining your vegetables and your flowers together, things like drawing in your beneficial insects and the pollinators and all of that, but she really dials in exactly how you can make this all work. She talks about the different types of annuals that you have. She talks about timing, succession planting, all of that. It's really packed with some very, very valuable information. I know that if you are a vegetables gardener or a flower gardener and you want to combine the two, I think you'll get a lot out of today's episode.
- Theresa: Now before we dive into the interview, I want you to know that today's podcast episode is brought to you by my Living Homegrown Institute, which is my monthly membership site. Now I believe that living an organic, farm-fresh lifestyle is really a journey in learning. Just as we learn different skills such as food fermentation and food-growing and even critter-keeping, there are three distinct stages of growth.
- Theresa: We start out with being curious. We go into experimentation, and eventually, we grow into mastery of these different skills. If you're looking at creating a farm-fresh lifestyle for yourself and you're curious where you fall on the growth scale, on the different skills, I've got a free resource for you. It's my Farm Fresh Success Path that my students use inside my Learning Institute, and it'll help you decide where you are on your own journey, the characteristics of that stage, and some action steps and information to take you to the next level. To get to the Success Path PDF, you just go to livinghomegrown.com/path, that's P-A-T-H, and you can download it there for free.

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- Theresa: Okay. Let's dive into my interview with Lisa Ziegler where we're going to talk about companion planting vegetables and flowers together.
- Theresa: Hey, Lisa. Thanks so much for coming on the show today.
- Lisa: Hi, Theresa. Thanks for having me.
- Theresa: Oh, I was very excited to talk about this topic because a lot of my listeners are vegetable gardeners. Doing flowers with the vegetables is something that I do and I know it makes my garden more beautiful, and it also has so many benefits, so this'll be a great topic. Before we dive in, I would love to have you tell everybody exactly how did you get into gardening and farming in the first place?
- Lisa: Sure. I don't really come from a gardening background. My parents had landscape, not a garden. As I became an adult, I literally read a book that I had picked up and knew I had found my dream. That book was called *The Flower Farmer* by Lynn Byczynski. I had just begun dabbling in gardening and kind of loved it. I was hooked, and picked up her book and read it and knew that I had found my dream. Interestingly enough, at the same time, I just so happened to meet a man, and he came with a great piece of land and had big gardens on it. He had tillers and kind of like he came with a gardening dowry, you might say. It just, it all became really, really easy, but I was a total novice just 20 years ago when I launched my flower-farming and vegetable-growing career.
- Theresa: When you started out, did you start with vegetables or did you start with flowers?
- Lisa: I kind of married into a big vegetable gardening family. My husband lived on what was his grandparents' homestead. Back then, it was just an acre and a half, and that included his home and several outbuildings. And his extended family, they all had big vegetable gardens here. They grew lots of beans and tomatoes and corn and those wonderful fresh-eaten vegetables but also those that could be put up for eating later.
- Lisa: When I married in, it was like the reins were handed to me, and I was eager because my home where I came from was all shade, and this was a full-sun garden, so I was so overly excited. I'm a bit over-ambitious. I said, "Oh, sure. I can do that. I'll grow beans and corn." Anyway, so I dove in and started learning. I really learned the beginning learning on growing actual vegetables, and flowers trickled in.
- Theresa: So you were kind of thrown in the deep end there.
- Lisa: Exactly.
- Theresa: Yeah, yeah. I know in your book when I was reading that you started adding flowers in. I don't know if the family was happy about that or not, but you started adding flowers in. How did that transition go with adding flowers into the vegetables that you were growing?

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- Lisa: Sure. I get the response from so many I call hardcore vegetable growers, people that are serious about their vegetable gardens and really do garden them, meaning they harvest and get the most out of their gardens. Their attitude or their thought process is, "Why would I give a square foot of that working garden over to flowers? You plant flowers in your landscape. That's where they belong, over there."
- Lisa: We had so much space here that I wasn't using for vegetables, it was kind of easy for me to squeak them in, and I, of course, was sharing my flowers. But they were thrilled, because the story that I hear so often and I still hear it today, even after all these years ... As I mentioned, this was my husband's grandparents' homestead. I hear from my mother- and father-in-law and other people in the community here just how pleased Grandma Ziegler would be, because she was a rose grower, that she would really be pleased with how it went. It was a shock, I think, at first, but they quickly jumped onboard with me growing flowers.
- Theresa: Oh, that's awesome. Well, I know it definitely adds a lot of beauty, and we're going to get into the benefit, for sure. But I also wanted to ask about how you guys were selling the vegetables with the flowers, because you guys, I know, I think you did farmer markets and things like that with the vegetables. Did you just start kind off selling flowers alongside the vegetables?
- Lisa: Actually, it was the other way around. We were growing massive vegetables, but actually ... We have a very large family, brothers and sisters and grandparents and such, so we were growing a lot of vegetables and sharing them amongst our families. It's when I started growing flowers that I entered the retail world of selling. Then, after we were selling flowers, I've come to learn that having a little bit of some of our vegetables, excess vegetables on the side available was a huge bonus and we built on that over the years.
- Lisa: So I started selling flowers first and then threw in a few bones of vegetables, and then through the most recent years we've added more and more volume of vegetables for our private members-only market customers, because that really helps them to become more regular. Our on-farm market is what we call a members-only. That means only people that are members of our market can come to my farm and pick up their flowers, and they're very faithful. However, if you're busy and in a pinch, sometimes you think, "Oh, I just won't go pick up flowers this week," because it's an at-will program. However, we've learned that when we have big, beautiful heirloom tomatoes available every week, they all come much more routinely, so we now sell more vegetables than we ever have in the past, in the most recent years.
- Theresa: Oh, that is so interesting. Well, I love the idea of a members-only, a private members-only community. It's not exactly a CSA, right? You're talking about that there is special, kind of like VIPs get to come whenever they want?
- Lisa: Well, actually, yes. It's kind of my take on a CSA. I am an urban farmer. I'm in the middle of the city, and I'm the last commercial farmer. What that all translates into is the city doesn't quite know what to do with me. I am quite a rule-follower, so I had to find a way to be able to allow people to come onto

my farm to pick up flowers while I was not running a store out of my farm as far as the city's concerned.

- Lisa: I came up with this members-only market, and you basically buy shares of my garden, and you can buy ... They buy them online, and then that's what they spend when they come to my farm to pick up their flowers. It's basically you purchase a gift card online and you spend that when you come to the farm. You can spend \$10.00 a week or \$100.00 a week, and you don't have to come every week. That really does a couple of things. It keeps me legal with my city. Customers are just coming to pick up what they've already purchased, and I control who's driving onto my farm and coming in to basically, to my big building which is an extension of my home.
- Theresa: That is so clever. I love it. Yes, in case someone isn't familiar, a community supported agriculture is what a CSA is, and it's kind of where you buy shares into a farm and then every week, you would get, very routinely you would get a box of the vegetables that were grown during that season. This is very clever because it kind of lets people go at their own pace and spend at their own pace, so I love that. And it would work with flowers because some weeks maybe they have a special event and they would want to spend more and they would be able to do that. I love that. Oh, it's very clever.
- Lisa: Yes. Thank you. It works really, really well, and we've tweaked it over the years, and my calculations are we see about 25% of members each week. We have 125 members, and everybody says, "Gosh, do they all come at one time?" No, it doesn't happen that way. That's just been historically. It just works out beautifully.
- Theresa: Yeah. That's very good. Well, I'm glad we talked about that, because I do have a lot of farmers who listen to this podcast and wannabe farmers, and that's kind of a clever, think-outside-the-box way to run it. Thanks for sharing that.
- Theresa: Well, I know that once you started planting the flowers with the vegetables, you talk about in your book how you started immediately seeing the benefits of doing that. I would love to dive into that, because I definitely see the benefits of combining them together too. What do you feel are some of the most important benefits that we get if we plant some flowers with our veggies?
- Lisa: Well, to put it in just a nutshell and then we'll go deeper, it's for the company that flowers keep. Flowers, nature has the most powerful pest control and pollination, and what brings those workers into our gardens are flowers. That's what they're looking for, to feed from and habitat, and I was just ... Because of the sheer volume of flowers that I grow as a flower farmer, it was so obvious to me as I started growing flowers. Good grief, this is like what people think a garden should look like, butterflies flitting around and bees everywhere, and with a closer look all kinds of good bugs crawling around.
- Lisa: It's the company they keep that really ... It attracts them in. Certainly, the blooms on vegetables are also beneficial to these guys, but there typically is not enough of them to really draw and roll out the red carpet to call these guys in, because our whole purpose is to get them to come into our garden and to

set up housekeeping, have babies, and stay, and a constant presence of flowers is what does that.

- Theresa: Yeah. That's so good. Yes. Definitely I notice that in my garden as well. It's funny that you said that it's like what you think a garden should be. I notice that too, that I was getting not only butterflies and a lot more bees, which I wanted to be able to pollinate all my vegetables, but I was also getting birds because they're coming in to look for the insects. It kind of creates a whole ecosystem, doesn't it?
- Lisa: Exactly. Yeah, birds are another. I try to highlight three or four creatures that people don't often consider to be beneficial to a garden. Birds are one of them. We all love seeing birds, but you just don't realize they eat so many insects, especially when their babies start being born. I really try to highlight spiders, wasps, and snakes, three things that most women ... sorry, girls ... just eek over. I have to warn when I'm doing programs that I'm getting ready to show a slide of a big, old, fuzzy spider. I've learned you have to warn people because some people are really afraid. But they are the most ferocious bad-bug eaters. They are like the super heroes in a garden.
- Theresa: Yeah. They clean house, man. They definitely do.
- Lisa: They do.
- Theresa: Now I'm someone who definitely is afraid of spiders, but as a gardener, they are so important and I had to get over that fear right away. I never kill a spider that's in my garden because I know they're like the police force out there, and they are really good. I'm glad that you are spreading the word on that.
- Theresa: Well, so one of the things I know you talk about also, not only the beneficial insects that we get but the pollinators, like you mentioned. Let's dive into pollinators first, because as a vegetable grower, when you have things like cucumbers and squash, they have to be pollinated and you definitely need to draw those people ... those people ... those little critters in. What are some of the ways that the flowers draw in pollinators specifically.
- Lisa: Oh, my. Our flowers are just loaded. I do not have honey bees here on my farm. There are honey bees in our neighborhood here, and there's 19 hives about two or three acres away from where I am. Those honey bees spend most of their days here on our farm, but I'll tell you who we really appreciate and have quite a strong community of here are native bees. Another, nobody knows who they are, that people don't realize that we have thousands of species of bees, let's just say, in North America. I think it's 4,000. Of those 4,000 species, only seven are honey bees.
- Lisa: All the rest of them live right outside your door, whatever your native bees are, and they are suffering from the same thing that honey bees are suffering from, loss of habitat and pesticide use. They are right outside your door, and all you have to do is attract them. There's certain families of flowers that attract bees more often because they have, I think, what you could describe as a heavier pollen load.

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- Lisa: What we have found to be a huge attractor for native bees is the family of Rudbeckias, which are better known as black-eyed Susans. Most people don't realize that there are so many different types of black-eyed Susans. We grow at least six or seven here on our farm, and because they were such a huge cut flower for us, the local ... I call him the bud man. Our entomologist around here where I live, he sees native bees here that just aren't commonly seen here. We attributed that to the strong presence of that family that native bees like, black-eyed Susan.
- Lisa: But we find pollinators on all of our flowers. They're busy working around, from zinnias to sunflowers. I do want to say we do as flower farmers grow pollen-less sunflowers, because, and I talk about this in the book, because they just make a better cut flower for many different reasons. But those sunflowers still produce nectar, so they still get lots of visitors, because we grow ... I don't feel bad about not growing pollen sunflowers because we grow a lot of them, because we grow a diverse garden. That's the whole point of all this, I think, is to grow many different types of flowers, many different types of vegetables, so we kind of cover all of our bases naturally.
- Lisa: We have an abundance of bees and we appreciate the honey bees and all they do over here on our farm, but we kind of have a soft spot for the native bees and bumble bees, in particular. We have truckloads of bumble bees on this farm, and I attribute our awesome tomato harvest and the quality of our tomatoes. They're huge, and many, many of them want to plant to our bumble bees.
- Theresa: Yeah. I'm glad you brought that up. There's something special about a bumble bee when it comes to a tomato. Could you explain that?
- Lisa: Sure. Many, some people do know and many don't that a tomato blossom has the little boy part and the little girl part. What's supposed to happen is when the wind blows a blossom, pollination happens. Well, if you want to speed that up or have it happen more frequently, when a bumble bee visits a tomato plant and goes over to that blossom, she reaches in with her jaws and grabs ahold of him. Then, if you've ever had a black-and-yellow big bumble bee land on you, usually the way you know he's there is you feel the vibration of the buzz.
- Lisa: Well, he buzzes that blossom and does exactly that. It shakes the pollen loose and pollination takes place. There's no other bee that does that. Without bumble bees ... I say this oftentimes that maybe some people ... Not the people that are listening to this because we're all garden-lovers. It's the people that are eating and don't understand this, that until tomatoes are \$14.00 a pound because they're having to pay somebody to use ... which is a real tool. I understand now they have tomato vibrators. It's a vibrator that the person doing the pollinating puts on the blossom and buzzes it just like a bumble bee would, because we're suffering from loss of bumble bees. Bumble bees are the only bees that can do that for our tomato crops. That alone should make people put flowers in their vegetable garden, because everybody grows tomatoes. You want better tomatoes, you got to have some flowers.
- Theresa: Yeah. I agree with that too. Bumble bees, I think, for the gardener, for us who are gardeners, you're right, we get it. We're not afraid of bumble bees, but I

know a lot of my friends who are not gardeners have a fear of them, and they're actually so gentle. They're very gentle creatures.

Lisa: Exactly.

Theresa: Unless you're going to try and squish him, her, the bumble bee, it's not going to try and ... They don't attack you because they're not guarding a honey source. They're just kind of minding their own business, and they'll go right by you and not be trying to attack you or anything, so definitely ... Is there a particular flower that the bumble bees you find are most attracted to in your garden?

Lisa: We'll talk about cool season and warm season. In the cool season, they love snapdragons, which gets them in really early, into the garden. Then, during the summer, they are particularly fond of Celosias, cockscomb and those types of flowers.

Theresa: Oh, great. Those are both beautiful, beautiful flowers.

Lisa: Yeah, yeah.

Theresa: Great. Well, let's talk about that since we're on that. Let's talk about the difference between warm season and cool season annuals. Now a lot of my listeners are gardeners, and they just think there's annuals and perennials, but there is actually two different sets of annuals. Let's talk about that because it definitely relates.

Lisa: Sure. I kind of fell into this farm and gardening thing through the back door. Well, when I really wanted to launch my farming business, it ended up that I had read the book through summer, and it was August. You know how it is when you discover something new. You're all pumped up to jump right in and do something. Well, it was August. What do you plant? I had to go back to my books to find out what can I maybe plant in September. Well, I started reading about flowers that they were calling cool-season hardy annuals, and I'm thinking annuals, they won't survive the winter.

Lisa: What I soon learned, that led me down a rabbit hole that I've been in now for 20 years and because it's the best hole I ever fell in, is that there are two ... For my purposes, there are two types of annuals. There's cool-season hardy annuals, and there's warm-season tender annuals. Most everyone thinks of warm-season tender annuals when they hear the word annual. They think of tomatoes and basil and sunflowers and zinnias, those things we plant as soon as the soil and the warm room ... room temperature ... the air temperature is warm. They grow through summer, and then when frost comes, it kills them.

Lisa: Well, there is a whole nother group of annuals which, interestingly enough, they were very widely grown back by our grandmothers and great grandmothers, back when they were a little bit more in tune perhaps to the seasonality of gardens. Peas, cabbages, parsley, and in flowers, snapdragons, sweet peas, those are all cool-season hardy annuals. They don't just take cold weather. They thrive in cold weather. Some even survive freezing for long periods of time, dependent on when you planted them.

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- Lisa: I learned from reading that book back in the beginning that I could plant snapdragons and sweet William, and I did exactly what the book told me. I planted them in October. We had a winter ... Where I am in Southeastern Virginia, we get single digits in the wintertime. We don't get a whole lot of snow, but we're cold and windy. I planted those plants and trusted that what that book said was going to work, and sure enough, my little plants went through winter smiling. They looked pretty frozen in January.
- Lisa: I was so afraid. That's the scariest thing a farmer does is to peak under the covers, row covers, in the middle of winter, but guess what? The first sign of spring, those plants had spent all winter building a great root system and becoming established. They just hit the ground running. In very early spring, we are deep in harvest here on our farm of hardy annuals when most everybody else is just waiting to get out there and plant, and it's because we grow so many cool-season hardy annuals that grow in cool to cold weather. There's two types. They both only live for one year or season, but you plant them at very different times.
- Theresa: Yeah. Oh, that's so good. Great explanation. Yeah, we should tell everybody we're recording this the beginning of March, so you are already harvesting right now in Virginia, in Southeastern Virginia.
- Lisa: Well, we're on the verge.
- Theresa: Yeah.
- Lisa: So, all those things that we planted in the fall are starting to shoot up, and we're also, we call it succession planting, planting another round of them. Valentine's Day is our target planting day for many of those hardy annuals once again. Sometimes we sweep snow off of our beds to plant those plants. It's really remarkable. They're like lettuce. They just love the cold weather. They just crisp right up and once you kind of wrap your head around the cool-season hardy annuals, there is no better plants to grow, vegetables and flowers, because guess what? Most of the work is done when it's cool outside.
- Theresa: Yeah, for sure. Then, what we can do and what you recommend and go through in your book is we try to pair up the cooler flowers with the cooler vegetables, so we would be planting ... The warmer flowers, the flowers that are warm-season annuals, we would pair those up with things like tomatoes so that our-
- Lisa: Sure.
- Theresa: ... timing is at the same time.
- Lisa: Right.
- Theresa: You said something there that I want to go back to, and that was you mentioned succession planting. You do a great job in the book about talking how we should balance out, keeping flowers going with our vegetables throughout the season. Could you talk about that a little bit? How do we keep the flowers going with the vegetables?

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- Lisa: Sure. The whole focus of the book is not just that flowers benefit vegetables. I speak to many people, vegetable gardeners, that'll say, "Well, you know, I tried that. I planted a little spot of flowers two years ago and I didn't see any difference." Well, the point is that you have to have flowers as early in the season as possible, meaning starting off with cool-season hardy annuals, then going into summer annuals and then finishing the season off with more cool-season annuals. By having this changing landscape of flowers, just like you do in vegetables, your parsley and your dill and maybe your snap peas, those cool season, your Brassicas, your cabbages and lettuces, how we're harvesting those early in the season. It's the same thing with flowers.
- Lisa: What I learned early on is that it is not a good idea to plant your entire garden on one day, or at one time, because not only will it kill you to do that, but then it all is ready to be harvested at one time and then you get tired and burnt out. We do what's called succession planting, and that's how you stretch out your harvest and all the other chores that kind of trickle down from that. It's hard to get used to in the beginning. If you had a 20-square-foot little spot to plant, I wouldn't plant all 20 square feet the first minute I was able to plant. I would plant a third of it, plant it in cool season.
- Lisa: Then, the next third you're going to plant for the next round of plants, whether that's warm season or another planting of cool season. By allowing myself to not feel that I had to plant every square inch available to me right away, I learned how to succession plant, and there's nothing that just helps gardeners overcome an abundance, too much abundance, bad abundance of weeds, of chores, than planting everything at once.
- Lisa: So we succession plant, and then we're constantly pulling and replanting. You come into spring and you have lettuce and spinach and maybe some parsley, and we've got those cool-season flowers going. Well, while we're harvesting those items, we're planting the next season, which would be the warm-season stuff. You're bearing fruit from the cool-season stuff and you're planting for the summer. By the time that summer, those flowers and your tomatoes start bearing, the cool-season stuff is kind of falling off because guess what? It's getting warm. It's humid. They're kind of petering out. Don't just let them sit there and take up space.
- Lisa: Our method is you pull those cool-season plants out, toss them in the compost bin, and you plant your next succession of whether it's another warm season or are you at fall already. A lot of us ... And it's hard. It's hard to pull out plants that you think, oh, man, maybe I'll get five more leaves of spinach off of this little area, but you're having to keep it weeded. There's just a better use. I say to people, "Annuals have a life, and their life ends." For me, to make the most out of every square inch I have, because I don't have many inches here, I'm landlocked in the middle of the city. The minute you stop producing on this farm, your life is over. We pull you out and put you in the compost bin and you contribute in a different way.
- Theresa: Yeah. This is such wise advice, especially for a new gardener because they usually ... Like you said, you were over-ambitious. I was too when I first started out. It can kind of knock the wind out of your sails if you plant your entire garden in one weekend and then you're, all of a sudden, you have several

weeks where it is really high maintenance all at once. That's usually where people fall off and it gets away from them because maybe they're taking vacations or whatever.

Theresa: Having it planted out ... I love your idea of just doing one-third and then doing another third and then another third. That would totally stretch it out, so then you're really only high maintenance on one-third of your garden area at a time, when everything's being harvested from that one spot. Plus, you're going to have flowers in there, so you can pick those and bring them in for enjoyment at the same time. So very good advice.

Theresa: I also want to say, since I just mentioned the beauty, something we haven't really talked about, but for me, the reason I plant flowers in my vegetable garden was really because I didn't have a lot of space. I garden on one-tenth of an acre here in the heart of Los Angeles. I did it out of necessity because I wanted to have some cut flowers. But people would immediately notice that, they think, oh, you grow vegetables. It's just going to be rows of green. But when you add that color in, it makes it magical.

Lisa: It really does. It really does.

Theresa: Yeah.

Lisa: No question about that. You probably experience this. People that have not grown flowers to cut, it certainly is a wonderful gift to stop somewhere and pick up a bouquet of flowers, whether it's for your honey or a sick person or something like that. That is certainly a wonderful gift. However, when you start cutting flowers from your own garden, first off, you immediately become the super star in your household.

Lisa: Do you know how many men gardeners ... because they're sometimes the toughest for me to crack about why they had to have flowers in their garden ... come back to me year after year and say, "Oh, my goodness, now my flowers are in church. Now, all my wife's friends, I'm the talk of the town because I'm the guy that grows the flowers." It touches people in a way when those flowers that are gifted come from a garden that you grew. People look at them all differently. They think of you. They think of all the hard work. They think they want to do it. Gifting flowers from your garden is like nothing else that a garden has ever, for me, has ever produced.

Lisa: Even 20 years after pulling into florist shops, my customers still come out of their shops eager to see what's in my van. They're flower people. It just really, really changes them. I did want to say, I meant to say earlier when we were talking, the whole point of this book is how you can keep the presence of flowers from the crack of spring until fall. By cutting flowers each week alongside your vegetables as you're harvesting, it keeps your plants producing just like it will your vegetables or your herbs. You're not having to constantly replant.

Lisa: People experience a pot of marigolds that bloom for four weeks and they're toasted. That's not how it is when you're cutting the flowers. There is a constant replenishing of blossoms and blooms continually, and the benefit is

you have flowers to carry in the house for your family, to share with your friends. It's really, really amazing, and you do not, as I know that you've experienced, you do not need much space.

Theresa: No. No, you don't need much space. You kind of hit the nail on the head here that you can grow things that no one can find anywhere else. You're growing things that no one can just walk into a florist and get, unless that florist is getting supplies from a local farmer, because these are not commercial-type flowers. They're not the things that everybody else has. They're unusual and different and heirloom and special. That's one of the things that makes it so amazing is people just ... The fragrance, everything, it's stuff you just can't get anywhere else. Just like you can't get the flavor of a tomato from the grocery store unless they have heirloom tomatoes that were ripened on the vine by a local farmer, you're just not going to get that unless you grow-

Lisa: Exactly.

Theresa: ... it yourself. Yeah.

Lisa: Exactly.

Theresa: One question I wanted to ask you, too, because you had mentioned the pollen-less sunflower, and I know a lot of people are probably thinking, "Ooh, what's a good one to grow?" Because it is a great cut flower. Do you have a favorite of that?

Lisa: Oh, yeah.

Theresa: Okay, what is it?

Lisa: We do. We grow a sunflower, it's called ProCut, P-R-O-C-U-T, and there's many colors within that series. I like that one because it's quick. It's from seed to bloom in 55 to 60 days.

Theresa: Wow.

Lisa: It's also day-length neutral, meaning we can grow it early in the season while the days are still short, and we can grow it in the fall when the days are getting shorter again, and it performs beautifully. What people don't know, and I tell all this in the book, too, is you control the size of a sunflower by your spacing. That ProCut, if you space them six inches apart in the garden, will be a perfect three- to five-inch bloom, which is perfect for a bouquet. If you want that to be a 10-inch bloom, you just space them 12 or 18 inches apart. You control the size of a bloom of a single-stem sunflower by spacing.

Theresa: Yeah. That was something I did not know until I learned that from you, so I think that's a great tip. I love that you gave that tip. That's fantastic. Well, Lisa, I can't thank you enough for coming on. This has been so, so informative, and I know more people are going to be planting flowers in their vegetable garden. I really encourage them to get your book because you go through all the seasons and what goes with what, timing, and all of that so they can do it in the best way possible. Thank you so much for coming on today.

Lisa: Oh, it's my pleasure.

Theresa: Well, I hope you enjoyed that interview with Lisa Ziegler, the author of *Vegetables Love Flowers: Companion Planting for Beauty and Bounty*. Now, as I said earlier, everything that we talked about is in the show notes for today's episode, Lisa's website, all of her books, and everything that she mentioned. To get to the show notes, you just go to livinghomegrown.com/141, and I will have a link in there that will take you to Lisa's book club, or book study, that is happening right now with her new book. The book just came out, and you can get weekly lessons from Lisa that go right alongside the chapters. When she told me that just kind of as an aside when we finished recording, I was like, "Man, that's such a great idea. What a great way to engage new readers of her book." Totally free. You can check it out. All the information is in today's show notes.

Theresa: As a reminder, today's podcast episode was brought to you by my Living Homegrown membership, and if you'd like to get the free PDF Success Path that my students use inside my membership, just go to livinghomegrown.com/path, and I'll have it there for you for free.

Theresa: That's it for today's episode. I hope it gave you some ideas and maybe you'll plant a few more flowers in your vegetable garden this year. Until next time, just try to live a little more local, seasonal, and homegrown. Take care, everybody.

Announcer: That's all for this episode of the Living Homegrown Podcast. Visit livinghomegrown.com to download Theresa's free Canning Resource Guide and find more tips on how to live farm fresh without the farm. Be sure to join Theresa Loe next time on the Living Homegrown Podcast.