

Colourful vignettes as summer rolls in

Bold & Brash or Soft & Subtle

What's your colour flavour of the coming summer? A walk on the wild side with piping hot pinks and pepper yellows, or a cooling summer salad of pastels?

Colour influences our moods enormously – yellow warms and cheers us up; blue and purple soothe, white refreshes, while red and orange stimulate us. Light – time of day and season – affects how we see colour; Pastel hues shine in the dusk light, while reds recede and even disappear into the darkening background. Cool greys, blues, mauve, pinks and pale yellow look best in the morning sun, and warm colours perform well in the harsh light of late afternoon.

Look beyond the seasonal flowers to a plant's shape and foliage colour and texture, characteristics that are on show year round. Large-leaved plants advance, so are best placed in front of the bed, with more delicate leaved plants behind to create depth; this is especially effective in small gardens with limited space. Ultimately though, combining plants with similar soil, water and light conditions is the first rule for a water wise, sustainable design.

TIPS:

- Narrow space? Plant a mix of blues and mauve as they tend to enlarge and open up an area.
- Blue and white combination heightens the colour of the blue and makes the white appear crisp and clean, while blues help to enhance the yellow spectrum.
- Yellow is the best colour seen on a bright day, and it adds a vibrancy and sparkle to any garden. If you have limited space, choose your shade carefully, for the most vivid yellow can make a small area appear smaller, while pale yellows tend to push back the boundaries.
- Strong light can bleach the colour from our plants, but red and yellow flowers often seem to gain in colour intensity; if they need toning down intersperse them with plain green foliage.
- White flowers become bright and reflective in strong light; soften them with silver or grey foliage companions.

BOLD, BRASH & BEAUTIFUL

Yellow, pink, red and orange.

You may steer clear of these combinations in your living room, but, as small vignettes in the garden, these mixtures can be breath-taking.

Mix 'n Match on the hot side:

Golden yellows - *Chrysocoma coma-aurea* (Golden Heads), *Gazania rigens*, and *Leucospermum cordifolia* - are outrageous companions for the dark pink *Pelargonium cucullatum*. Or take your liking for the brash a step further and pair the pink *Pelargonium* with orange-red watsonias. No less intense is the matching of brick-red *Gazania krebsiana* with the Golden Heads. I love the large *Gazania* flowers in front of a luminous orange Zonal *Pelargonium* shrub – note the pink *Pelargonium* not quite blending into the background. The foliage of our extensive Cranesbill range provides strong form and texture through the year, plus stunning seasonal colour. These combinations infuse the garden – and gardener – with energy.

A tad too strong? Greys help to calm the energy of a hot garden. Tone down the intense pink with a spread of butter-yellow *Arctotis stoechadifolia* whose grey leaves subdue the strong shade, or surround it with the narrow vertical stems of *Selago corymbosa*. The large white flower heads and expanse of green foliage calm the arrangement; even out of flower these perennials add interesting texture and form to the garden. Or choose a paler pink - *Pelargonium hispidum* - to combine with a yellow-orange *Leucospermum oleifolium* for an unusual light, bright palette.

Love pink? Let the hybrid *Scabiosa* mingle with flowering stems of *Diascia integerrima* for a delectable swirl of candyfloss pink.

Calm down bright yellow daisies with mauve *Geranium* buttercups, or turn it up a notch and add height with bright green leaves and dark red ray florets of *Gerbera jamesonii*.

Without the silver-grey leaves of *Ursinia sericea* and white-flowering *Selago corymbosa*, you'd need sunglasses to view this vibrant orange-pink *Pelargonium salmoneum* and acid-yellow *Cineraria saxifraga* combination.

Instead of *Chrysocoma coma-aurea* summer rainfall gardeners can try *Helichrysum kraussii*, *H. pilosellum*, *pallidum*, *cymosum*, *aureum*, *Nidorella auriculata* or *N. undulata*. For smaller displays, try the *Berkeya* species, *B. setifera*, *speciosa* or *umbellata*.

SOFT, COOL & CALM

Shades of blue, purple & white

Mauves provide attractive colour while calming down a garden scene; plant *Geranium incanum* to mingle at ground level with white *Scabiosa incisa* and *Felicia* species. Or use it as a cooling contrast to pastel pink and salmon Pelargoniums. Flowers on slender stalks add graceful movement to the design.

The long, vertical grey stems of *Pentzia dentata* blend softly with the soft mauve-pink Scabious, a perfect pairing for a contemplative space. Or combine the Pincushion with white *Dimorphotheca* or *Syncarpha vestita*.

Without the grey and white *Syncarpha* – or any of the small *Helichrysum* species – the bright yellow *Cineraria* might just be a little ordinary! If you already have a spread of bright yellow turn down the temperature with grey helichrysums or Cape gardeners can plant the silver-grey *Seriphium plumosum*.

White Trailing Daisy will find its way through the blue-grey leaves of *Hilliardiella capensis* to open large velvet flowers alongside those of feathery purple.

For those who watch the sun go down, why not opt for a vignette of white, grey and green. Try *Scabiosa incisa*, grey-leaved helichrysums (*H. petiolare*, *H. sutherlandii*, *H. cymosa*), and white felicias (*F. amelloides*, *F. dregeii*, *F. erigeroides*).