

Lessons From Monet's Garden (Part II)

Christina Lacie

07/27/2011

Returning to artist Claude Monet's garden in Giverny, France, we will examine Monet's color choices and how they harmonize in his plantings. Last week we learned of many of his philosophies including mingling flowers with fruits and vegetables and the importance of daily deadheading. But as an artist, Monet had a unique perspective on color in the garden. Let's take a look.

In a late spring border of mixed flowers, Monet's color choices focused in red, white and blue and were layered from back to front. 1) white Foxglove, 2) white Dame's rocket, 3) a mix of blue and mauve Bearded iris and blue Dutch iris, 4) an alternating row of red Peonies and scarlet Oriental poppies, 5) white Forget-me-nots, 6) another alternating row of blue Violas and Bluebells, 7) and the front row of pink Aubrieta.

With a palette of blue, orange and yellow layered back to front in a late summer mixed bed were: 1) orange Dahlias alternating with yellow perennial sunflowers and a dash of Impatiens balfourii scattered in, 2) blue New England asters, 3) A mixed row of yellow cosmos, yellow Rudbeckia, orange and yellow African marigolds, Salvia 'Victoria blue,' and 4) blue Ageratum 'Horizon.'

In contrasting flower beds, Monet arrived at cool-color harmony by mixing purple and mauve Tulips with blue Tulips and blue Forget-me-nots, along with Hydrangea 'Nikko blue' and Gypsophilia. In planting hot-color harmonies, Monet chose: Siberian wallflowers and pansies, Asiatic hybrid lilies, yellow Loosestrife and red, yellow and orange Hydrangea and Nasturtium.

Entwining colors on arbors, fences and trellises, Monet's choices included: Morning glory 'Heavenly blue' with yellow and orange climbing Nasturtiums or a climbing Rose 'American Pillar' partnered with Clematis 'Jackmanii' which show off the dramatic primary colors with their yellow centers.

Gardening from an artist's perspective provides those of us perhaps a bit color challenged with lessons in color selection as well as inspiration and insight. Monet used intrinsic knowledge and play of color to add texture, iridescence, contrast and harmony to his gardens. His gardening journeys might be something to borrow from as we undertake our own garden challenges.