

Redding Garden Club

Which Color Garden Are You?

By Jill Kotch

Last week, my sister-in-law emailed me a very interesting article that appeared in The New York Times (October 1982) about the effects of color on behavior. Thinking this might translate into our gardens, I checked the information and updates and found a fascinating world from medicine to marketing. **Color plays such a huge part in our lives; of some we are aware, others not so much.**



Color affects your blood pressure, pulse, respiration, and brain activity. There are pacifying affects noticed when psychologically troubled children are placed in a pink room. Sports coaches have had the opposing team's locker rooms painted pink, which supposedly is so soothing that it adversely affects their game. Restaurants use reds subtly to whet your appetite. Hospitals place newborn jaundiced babies under blue lights to correct the jaundice. Ultra Violet light therapy is used for psoriasis. Blue night-lighting in crime-ridden neighborhoods is said to have decreased crimes.

In the United States, **blue is the favorite color of 35% of the population**, green 16%, purple 10% and red 9%. There are regional and national color preferences. In Western societies, brides wear white, the color of purity and innocence. In China, white is funereal and brides wear red. Most men find women dressed in red more likely to catch their eye romantically. It can get very involved!

Fine Gardening (October 13, 2014) had several short articles on using color in our gardens. Sydney Eddison wrote that red is the color of passion and emotion. **Pure red means STOP and look at me, especially when the flowers are very large—think dinner plate dahlias.** Red can be used effectively when offset with greens, or in contrast with white, or as a companion to the other hot colors, yellow and orange. True red is a warm red. It is hard to mix warm and cool reds as they clash. Cooler reds are darker and mix well with chartreuses, violets, and pinks. Red is best closer up as it can get lost at a distance. Yellow, white, and pink stand up to the long view.

In the same issue, Tom Peace wrote about purple, the color of royalty (and little girls, these days!) **Many cultivars that are supposedly purple are not.** Some are burgundy (think purple leafed plum) or purple echinaceas (pink). Blue+Red=Purple; a little more Blue=Indigo; a little more Red=Violet; and even more Red=Magenta. If you add some white it cools the purple, and with black the purples become deeper. Purple and red sizzle while purples and blues are

cool. Magenta looks great with silver foliage such as stachys or artemisias. Purple, like red, also gets lost in the distance unless there is a silver or white contrast added.

So, which garden are you? This is sort of like the Color Me parties of a few decades ago when we had our "colors done" into winter, spring, summer, and fall. As you are putting the gardens to bed this autumn and noting what worked and what didn't, what appeals to you? Safe, soft pastel color, maybe spiced up with some purple? Hot primary? A sophisticated dark and white garden? A moon garden? A rainbow? Plenty of time to dream: the catalogs won't come until January!