

Sunset

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Splash of color

Paint wakes up a quiet garden corner



Color is a powerful design tool, most often introduced into a garden with flowers or accessories such as tiles and fabrics. But paint — applied to walls, paving, arbors, or even pots — can achieve remarkable results of its own.

Used carefully, colored walls and structures create different effects. Some colors seem to expand the garden; others make it smaller. Warm oranges and reds can make an outdoor space vibrate; cool blues, grays, or greens create a sense of calm.

San Francisco landscape designer Topher Delaney often uses paint to dress up her landscapes and to act as a foil for plants. To ensure that hues are compatible, Delaney chooses her paint first, then selects the plants.

Landscape architect Chad Robert of Phoenix uses strong colors to add accents to a sparse design. "The desert blooms subtly," he says. "Color from paint offers another opportunity to create interest."

So experiment. As Robert says, "If you don't like the color, you can always paint over it."

Using powerful hues

Selecting paint can be as simple as picking a color that appeals to you. But before you get carried away with lipstick red, keep in mind that a strong hue will look very intense when applied to a large area. Here are some other things you should know.

Cool colors (blues, greens) make an object recede, as shown at right. Below, warm colors (reds, oranges, yellows) bring it to the foreground.

A simple shift in a color's shade (its lightness or darkness) can determine whether a particular combination works. Celadon green and light violet are gorgeous together, says Delaney. But pair that same green with dark violet, and the combination is less appealing.

To avoid making mistakes at the outset, check the color wheel (right) before you buy paint. If you want to use more than one color, choose two complements (those opposite each other on the color wheel, such as yellow and violet or blue and orange), or use three noncontiguous colors (orange, violet, and green, or yellow, red, and blue). Shades of the same color make a more

subtle accent.

DESIGN

Chad Robert, Phoenix (www.exteriors-cr.com or 602/252-6775).

Topher Delaney, San Francisco (415/621-9899)

COLORFUL TIPS

Make a focal point. Painting a gate or a pair of chairs in a vivid hue and setting them at the end of a lawn will draw your eye to them. A highly colored wall can draw attention away from an unattractive view. A bright picket fence stands out and makes a garden corner feel more enclosed than a brown fence.

Create a foil for plants. Use colored walls to make plants more visible, or use plants as a backdrop for colored walls. Magnolia flowers backed by a wall of soft blue-gray or olive green will stand out. On the other hand, a tall, dark green cypress hedge behind a bright orange wall will make the wall pop (as shown at top).

Lauren Bonar Swezey

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