**LAWN LOVE**

# How to Use Color Theory in Landscape Design

By Annie Parnell | Published: September 30, 2022

Landscaping
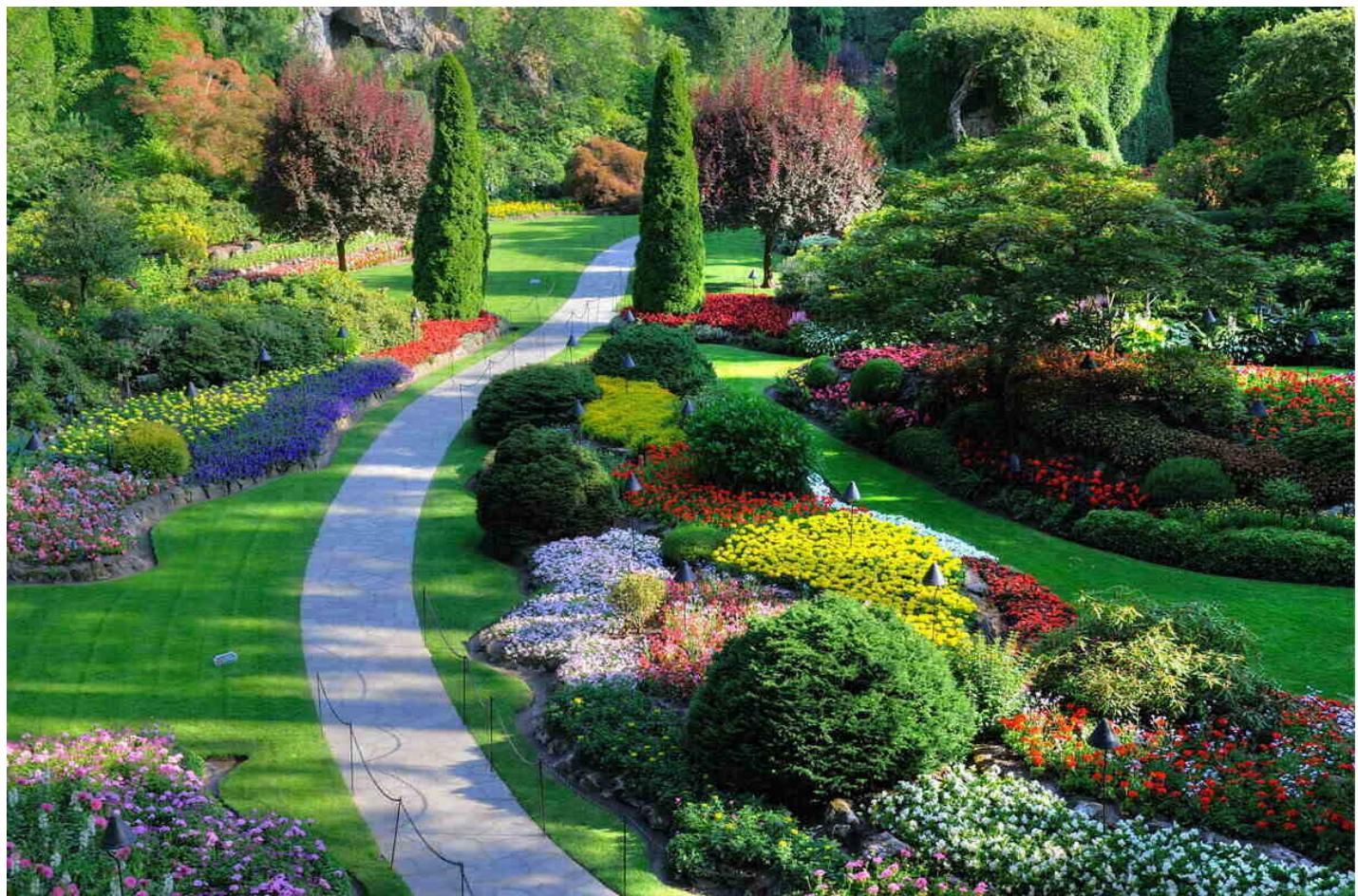


If you're looking to take your landscape design to the next level, incorporating a color scheme opens up a rainbow of possibilities to transform your space. But how can you make sure that you're making the most of them?

In this article, we'll cover the basics of color theory, potential color schemes, and the many ways you can make color work for you. Read on to learn how to use color theory in landscape design.

## In this article we'll cover:

# Why use color theory in landscape design?



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Savvy use of color can do wonders for your landscape. Color can add a unifying element or draw attention to a focal point in your garden. It can make a **small garden** seem bigger, or a large space feel cozy.

Color is one of the most powerful tricks up a gardener's sleeve, but incorporating it into your own landscape design can seem overwhelming at first. Read on to learn how to make color work for you.

## Understanding the color wheel

The color wheel is the perfect guide to incorporating color into your landscape using the design principle of color theory. This design graphic maps the relationships between primary colors and secondary colors, showing how they combine and which ones are cool and warm.

## Primary colors

The primary colors yellow, blue, and red are the basic elements of the color wheel. Combine these colors to create **secondary** and **tertiary** colors.

## Secondary colors

Two primary colors are combined to create **secondary colors.** Purple is made from red and blue, orange from red and yellow, and green from yellow and blue.

## Tertiary colors

**Tertiary colors** come from combining one primary and one secondary color — such as blue and purple make indigo, yellow and green make chartreuse, or yellow and orange make amber.

## Warm and cool colors in the landscape

**Cool colors** like blue and green encourage a calming feeling, while **warm colors** like red, orange, and yellow are higher energy. Purple is a versatile color – it can be cool or warm, depending on its surroundings!

In general, warm colors will pop in your landscape, while cool colors will blend into their surroundings and lend a calming feel. There are plenty of ways to use these guiding principles in your landscape.

## Tints and shades of the color wheel

In addition to the primary and secondary colors of the color wheel, **tints** and **shades** of each color can make an impact on your garden design.

- A **tint** is a lighter version of a color created by adding white to it. For example, pink is a tint of red.
- A **shade** is a darker version created by adding black. Maroon is a shade of red.

## Benefits of the color wheel

Having an understanding of the color wheel allows you to use it for a variety of purposes in landscape design. Here are some benefits of using the color wheel in your landscape:

- Draw attention to things you want to be noticed, like the front door or a water feature

- Draw attention away from utilities and other unwanted elements

- **Attract butterflies** and other pollinators

- Complement other plants in the garden

- Unify your landscape with a **theme**

- Make your space seem larger or cozier

- Balance with home design or other garden beds

- Create excitement or serenity

# Color scheme ideas for landscape design

Now that you're familiar with the color wheel, there are plenty of ways to put it to use in your landscape. The right color choice will appeal to the human eye and work well with hardscape elements and other garden colors. Here are some color combination ideas to use in your yard.

## Nature-Inspired

The plants in your yard are part of nature, so why not turn to nature for color inspiration? Color schemes based on nature are easy to recreate in your yard and can be customized to your favorite sights. Try a sunset palette with rich, warm hues, a dark green forest vibe, or ocean inspiration with blue-green and amber.

## Monochrome

Selecting a monochromatic color scheme is a great way to let your favorite color shine in your landscape. Select tints and shades of a single color for a cohesive palette that still has plenty of room for creativity. Can't get enough of purple? Combine delicate pastel lavender with royal purple flowers like hydrangeas for a landscape design that's sure to pop.

## Complementary

Look across the color wheel for **complementary** colors, or colors found on the opposite sides of the wheel from each other. These colors pair wonderfully in a landscape, with each adding to the intensity of the other. Purple and yellow is one common

complementary landscape combination – some garden pansies even feature this color scheme naturally! Red and green are also a complementary color pair, as are blue and orange.

## Analogous

The colors found next to each other on the color wheel are **analogous**, making for a visually harmonious scheme. Analogous colors can create a cool or warm effect. Combine yellow and green, blue and purple, or red and orange for a unified color scheme.

## Primary

Get back to basics with a primary color design that relies on the classic combination of yellow, red, and blue. These colors will allow you to attract the eye with a warm pop while also making room for cool calm. Primary colors are also a great color scheme for educational gardens.

# Flower ideas for the color wheel
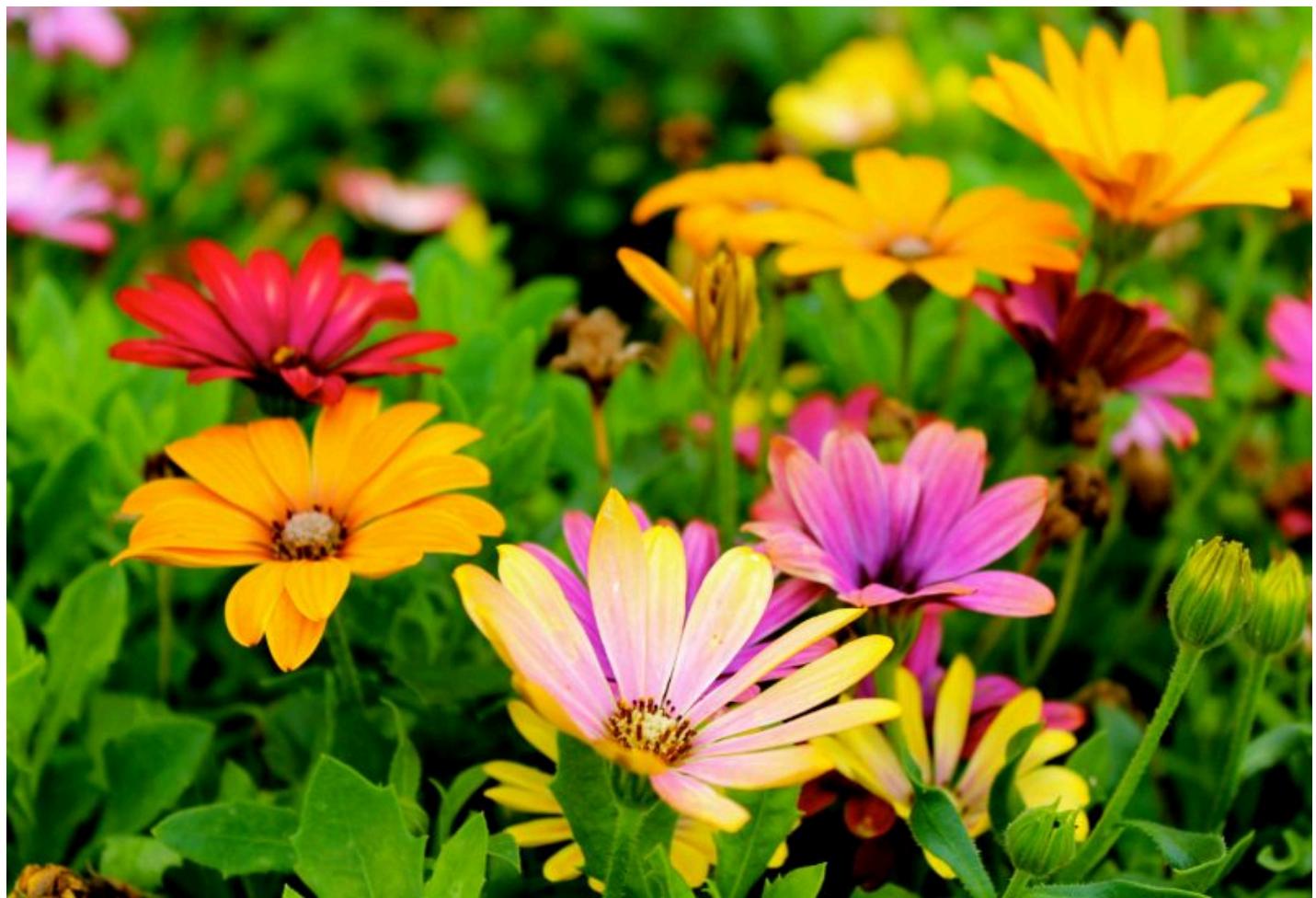
Now that you know the basics of color theory, it's time to brainstorm some blooms for your landscaping palette. Here are a few ideas for colorful garden flowers:

- **Red:** Roses, carnations, poppies

- **Orange:** Tiger lilies, chrysanthemums, marigolds

- **Yellow:** Daffodils, black-eyed Susans, sunflowers

- **Green:** Dianthus, gladiolus, green daylilies

- **Blue:** Bluebells, morning glories, salvia

- **Purple:** Irises, violets, wisteria

## A rainbow of possibilities

Incorporating color in your landscape design can seem daunting, but using this important tool can make a big difference in your yard. Feel like the color wheel is leaving you spinning? Connect with a [landscaping professional](#) today for personalized assistance in crafting the colorful landscape of your dreams.

Is your scruffy lawn distracting from your garden's new beauty? Call up a [local lawn care pro](#) for mowing, trimming, and edging so that your manicured grass can complement your elegant garden beds.

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