Color & Combination in the Herbaceous Border
presented by Judy Glattstein
at the 2015 Rutgers Home Gardeners School

Color Terms

Colors next to each other on the color wheel produce a gentle harmony low in contrast with a pleasing, moderate, effect overall.

Colors opposite each other on the color wheel have dramatic, strong, powerful contrasts. These can be overwhelming when used in large areas.

A simple way to balance color in the herbaceous border makes use of adjacent colors plus their tints for the majority of color with an accent from the opposite side of the color wheel.

Glossary of Color Terms

**Hue**
The colors themselves: red, orange, yellow, blue, green, etc.

**Tint**
A color given by mixing white with a hue

**Shade**
A color created by mixing black with a hue

**Tone**
A color made by mixing varying percentages of black and white (gray) with a hue

**Value**
The inherent brightness of a color. For example, pure yellow is brighter than pure blue

**Primary Color**
Red, yellow, blue

**Secondary Color**
Combination of two primary colors, e.g. blue + yellow = green

**Tertiary Color**
Combination of a primary and a secondary color e.g. yellow + green = yellow green (chartreuse, pea green)

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**Plant Categories**

**anchor plants / key perennials**

backbone - woody plants that are true dwarfs or pruned to size

select long lived perennials in a range of sizes & different flowering times

**bulbs**

semi-permanent such as snowdrops, arum in rear of the border under shrubs

short lived such as tulips planted in stream-like drifts OR formally

**self-sowers**

encourage self-sowers to colonize / allow seed development / don’t mulch / learn to recognize seedlings / move & thin as necessary example: Lunaria annua

**spring / early summer bedding plants**

biennials such as foxgloves / annuals such as Ammi majus / perennials such

**summer bedding plants**

annuals such as zinnia, cosmos, ageratum, coleus

bulbs & tubers such as canna, dahlia

tender perennials such as tender grasses, e.g. Pennisetum setaceum

tropicals such as banana, brugmansia

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