# Color and the WOW Factor

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1. The Brain and Color
   - Brain gets information
   - Filters out junk
   - Flags the important stuff
   - Compiles what it keeps into *perceptions*
   - Can be tricked

2. The Brain and Warm Colors
   - Warm = red, yellow, brown
   - Orange creates excitement in the brain
   - Warm colors are a visual draw
   - Warm colors advance upon us
   - Warm colors are best used near a central focus

3. The Brain and Cool Colors
   - Cool = blue, green, purples
   - Best used along back borders
   - Create an illusion of distance
   - Cool colors look larger

4. Color Evokes Emotions
   - Red = attention!
   - Yellow = attention and/or warning
   - Pink = exciting, bright, warm
   - Blue = cool, relaxing, mixes well with other colors
   - Green – relaxes the eye and the brain

5. Color is the Most Important Element in a Landscape Design
   - Can make or break a landscape
   - Can either create cohesion or disarray
   - It is the most misused design element
   - Pantone (www.pantone.com) is the US trendsetter in color

6. Common Mistakes in Using Color in the Landscape
   - Too many colors
   - Fewer colors make a much more dramatic statement
   - Small landscape – fewer colors. Use 3 to 5 colors

- Large landscapes – can add a few more colors, but not many (5 to 7; 7 to 9). Better to use larger masses of the same color – than more colors.
- Green is a color too!
    - Green plus textural foliage = drama
    - Can be relaxing and beautiful
    - Do not mix a lot of variegated foliage in the same area – the effect will be too busy and make the eye confused
- For the WOW factor
    - Use 3 to 5 colors
    - Use large groups of plants of these colors

7. Making Less Look Like More with Color
    - Group plants of the same color
    - Mirror color schemes on both sides of a drive, walkway to make the area look wider than it is
    - Soft colors make an area feel larger because they seem farther away
    - Bold primary colors seem to advance toward the viewer and draw attention
    - Create repetition and movement by planting spots of the same color throughout the landscape

8. Light Affects How Color is interpreted by the Brain
    - In Shade
        - Yellow, white, chartreuse brighten up shady areas and make them look lighter
        - Pastels and white are best for shade
        - Warm colors will appear dull (or disappear altogether) in shade
    - In Direct Sunlight
        - Bright colors are best for areas in full direct sunlight (colors stay true in this light)
        - Pastels and whites fade to a dirty white in full sun
        - White is magnified in bright light and depending on the area, may overwhelm

9. Blue in the Landscape
    - Adds depth
    - Excellent transition color
    - Liven up blues with white, yellow or orange
    - Can be intensified with silver (e.g. Dusty Miller, Curry)
    - Will wash out purplish blues if used together
    - Do not use with green – they muddle together

10. Red in the Landscape
    - Signals energy and excitement
    - Best used as an accent, a highlight or a border
    - Blue or silver will cool it down
    - Too much red can be overpowering and “hot”
    - Combines well with pink

11. Yellow in the Landscape
    - Loud and brassy so use sparingly
    - Catches light and brightens up shade
    - Combines well with hot and warm colors
    - Pale yellow goes well with blues
    - White will diffuse the intensity of yellows
    - Medium yellows are complimented with purples for landscape drama

12. Silver / Gray in the Landscape

    - Silver and gray pick up and reflect light
    - Can intensify other colors
    - Breaks up mass plantings of single colors and acts as a bridge between different colors
    - Excellent transition color

13. White in the Landscape
    - Neutralizes loud color combinations
    - Separates color groups and prevents blending
    - Shows up well at night
    - Brightens up shady areas
    - Makes other colors look richer
    - The eye sees white before any other color – so it is best used to highlight a focal point

14. Pastels in the Landscape
    - Pastels create soft / subtle effects
    - Pastels combine best with other pastels
    - Foliage colors of silver or gray are excellent with pastels

15. Design for the Time
    - When will you be in the garden the most? Select the color pallet appropriate for that time of day.
    - Realize that light affects how the brain interprets color and that this changes with the seasons
    - Make sure that plants which complement each other all boom at the same time
        - If you want plants to bloom at the same time – buy them at the same time
        - Retail nurseries purchase plants in bud/bloom stage so if they are blooming together in the nursery they will bloom together in your landscape
        - Plant in layers for more drama

16. Other Ways to Add Color
    - Containers – contrast the color of the container with what's in it
    - Paint the fence – Painted fences intensify plant colors and affect the perception of plant colors. Can make a dramatic difference in how the brain sees the landscape
    - Mirrors in the garden – give the illusion of color
    - Structures – can be painted to provide an accent color, or be a canvas for more intensive color

*This lovely Houston garden uses Behr plus 10 Solid Color Stain No. 390 / Ponderosa Green on the fence*

*This electric blue door draws interest to the overwhelming concentration of gray*