



Expert tip

A single, neutral colour for walling or paving can have a calming effect and will suit a landscape that is meant to be a relaxing space. To add interest, simply introduce a few subtle colour accents in your decor.

Colour clues

Colour plays a key role in garden design. It sets the scene or creates the desired mood

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Tip 1: Warm or cool

Learn about the impact certain colours can have. Generally speaking, colours can be defined as warm or cool. Warm colours are those you would associate with sunshine (red, orange, pink, yellow, brown) while cool colours are those you'd associate with an overcast day, the ocean or sky, or a field (grey, blue, green). Warm colours tend to stand out and arouse emotion; cool colours fade into the background and calm the senses.

Tip 2: The right tone

Every colour comes in a variety of tones (running the gamut from light to dark) so if you want to create aesthetic unity, whether in a single space or across several different outdoor areas, you can use various tones of the one colour. Red, for example, is a warm colour but it may be used in different tones to evoke different moods across the garden. In a courtyard where you want to encourage activity and motivate guests to mingle, you could include a bright red feature wall. Or if a more restful, contemplative space is desired you could try painting a wall a softer pink or introducing a border of pink Carpet Roses™ or drifts of pink Japanese windflowers.

Tip 3: Work with the light

Both natural and artificial light can affect how we comprehend a colour. Because of the brightness of the Australian sun, colours

used outdoors appear brighter, so very dark colours can be used outside and their hue will be more obvious than in a dim room. On the other hand, very vibrant, bold colours can appear too bright and garish, unless they're to be used somewhere like a play area. The effect is lessened in shaded areas, such as under a tree where the light is dappled. The other thing to consider is that very light colour tones can appear washed out in bright sunlight and when used over big areas, such as walls or paving, can create glare. Because of this effect, you should always check how a colour will look outside during daylight hours – never just make your choice sitting indoors looking at colour charts or catalogues.

Tip 4: Drawing inspiration

When you hear the phrase “seasonal colour changes” you probably think of the autumn leaves of exotic deciduous trees. However, in the Australian landscape there are many different types of colour changes that can be enjoyed – and employed – depending on the time of the year. Sydney red gums, for example, lose their outer layer of pale bark in summer, displaying the reddish orange of the layer of bark underneath. What is more, the intensity of the colour of the bark appears to change throughout the day as the angle of the sun shifts and the degree of brightness fluctuates.

Tip 5: Landscaping materials

Elements that can be used to add colour to a garden include walls, screens, paving, gravel,

ABOVE LEFT Red is a great colour for adding bold accents in smaller gardens or in larger outdoor spaces for injecting a bit of drama.

ABOVE When choosing wall colours, think texture as well as hue. Pictured here, Lime Wash from Porter's Paints, www.porterspains.com.

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP In a courtyard or entertaining area where you want to encourage activity and motivate guests to mingle, include a red wall.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM Use different coloured cushions to change a room's look. Pictured, Amazon piped outdoor cushions from Rapee, www.rapee.com.au.

Integrated approach

- Complement the colour of your house when choosing colours for the landscape. A brightly coloured contemporary landscape won't suit a Federation-style house so you need to be realistic.
- Also consider your existing vegetation, the colours of surrounding buildings, borrowed views of your neighbour's garden and the streetscape, as these will impact the new colours you introduce.
- To tie a backyard and front garden together, even if each has a different landscape style, use similar colours. This might be in the paving, garden edging or walling; even the colour of your flowering plants.



ornaments, sculpture, planters, furniture, umbrellas, water features... even lighting. And don't forget the flowers, bark and foliage of plants. There is no shortage of hard or softscaping elements, not to mention items of decor that can be used to help establish mood as well as give a garden aesthetic appeal and increased functionality. It's all about context and the way in which elements are combined and highlighted.

Tip 6: Add some accents

Interest can be created by placing a vividly coloured feature in an area of muted tones, or by placing it against a backdrop of a contrasting colour. This has the effect of drawing the eye to specific features or areas of a garden rather than letting the eye wander aimlessly. A statement can be made by matching colours throughout the design but this should be considered carefully as too much of one colour may overwhelm.

Tip 7: Be a little bold

For some, choosing colours can be a daunting experience because it is so hard to picture what the colours will end up looking like, but avoiding colour altogether only results in a boring landscape that does nothing to attract you outdoors. A "safe" way to go about using colour is to use neutral base colours for things like paving, walls and furniture, keep the background green (with lawn and hedging plants or trees) then add single colour embellishments (or accents) for things like sculptures and pots. ■

Prepared by Jacki Brown and the ecodesign team on behalf of the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers & Managers (AILDM): www.aildm.com.au

