

Virginia Zoo Gardens

Color Gardens



Come see the animals in our gardens!



WHITE, BLUE, YELLOW, AND ORANGE

Do you want to plant a garden in your favorite color? Easy enough. Just choose flowers of blue, for example. Sky blue, ice blue, lavender, dark purple, periwinkle, mid-blue, blue bi-color, spring, summer, or fall blooming, tall, short, large leaves, small leaves, evergreen, deciduous, annual, perennial ...

A single color, or monochromatic, garden is not as simple as it may seem. Rather than being a single color, different shades reflect the original color while texture, foliage, and flower form become critical design elements. At the Virginia Zoo, four different color beds offer the Tidewater gardener ideas for white, blue, yellow, and orange gardens.

The White Garden is also known as the Moon Garden because twilight is the time a white garden glows. Luminous flowers, heady fragrances, night flying moths, and flickering fireflies create a magical scene. In daylight, a white garden creates a cool, calming effect. The silver foliages of cardoon, artemisia, lamb's ears, and santolina, act as a bridge between white flowers and green leaves as well as combining textures from bold to lacy.

Evergreen shrubs such as pittosporum and euonymus are available in variegated (green and white) forms and can provide year round interest. Striped ornamental grasses and ground-hugging, variegated bishop's weed take the color scheme literally from the ground up. Vines such as sweet autumn clematis and moon vine, white roses (especially 'Blanc Double du Coubert'), gardenias, ginger, and lilies bring unrivaled fragrance into the garden. For a tasty twist, white eggplant, peppers, okra, and tomatoes can mingle with white flowers. To give depth to the whole design, sprinkle in an accent color of blue or pink flowers, or dark purple foliage (such as 'Purple Knight' alternanthera or 'New Zealand' castor bean).

The Blue Garden represents many shades of blue and lavender. Very few flowers are a true sky blue, but 'Heavenly Blue' morning glory, and bog sage come close. Annuals such as verbena, petunia, ageratum, bachelor's button, and fan flower bloom continuously while perennials such as Japanese roof iris and Mexican bush sage come and go. Leaf color is not forgotten in a blue garden. 'Limelight' sage and 'Sweet Kate' spiderwort have rich blue flowers highlighted by golden foliage.

Color Gardens cont.

Silver-leafed *Centaurea* 'Colchester White' has small purple flowers but its foliage is its most valuable contribution in a blue garden. The exotic Persian shield (*Strobilanthes*) shimmers with burgundy, lilac, and blue striped leaves. Rising to challenge the blue of the sky, shrubs and small trees such as butterfly bush, chaste tree (*Vitex*), and 'Blue Satin' hibiscus create height in a blue garden.

On the sunnier side, there are the Yellow and the Orange Gardens. The same design basics apply with exotic foliage provided by variegated cannas. 'Minerva', 'Bengal Tiger' and 'Tropicanna' are favorites. Many of the flowers in these two gardens are sorted from multicolored annual mixtures of Mexican zinnias, 'Bright Lights' Swiss chard, 'Pampas Plume' celosia, marigolds, and rudbeckia. Yellow melampodium and 'Profusion Fire' zinnias were the highlights of these gardens last summer. Other annuals include lantana, coleus, peppers, tomatoes, and even melons.

In winter, evergreens provide the bone structure of the garden while pansies, violas, kales and mustards keep the color going. Spring bulbs and snapdragons offer another round of bloom before the whole process starts over.

Don't have much space? A color garden can be planted in a single container, and it is easily changed. Bored with just one color? Be adventurous and select flowers that bloom in distinct seasons and watch the color schemes change before your very eyes.

The Color Gardens of the Virginia Zoo may color us dizzy with all the possibilities.

Websites:

- "Crayola Color Garden": http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/kids_gardening/7655/1
- Red, White, and Blue Garden: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/envirohort/426-210/426-210.html>