

# FLOWERS & COLOUR



3.

*Punica granatum.*

Watercolour of *Punica granatum* (pomegranate) blossom and leaves  
Unknown Chinese artist, early C.19th. probably Cory bequest.

Part of the RHS Lindley Library Collection

*A Spring in London I fell in love. At the time I used a bright pink handbag from the iconic department store in Paris called Tati. One night, we filled my bag with daffodils. The bright yellow flowers seemed to radiate the happiness I felt.*

## EXERCISE 1. Drawing and Learning

During the first lockdown in Paris, our parks and gardens were all closed. We were allowed outside for one hour per day. On my daily walk with my son I collected small bouquets of flowers that I found growing on the street; from cracks in the pavement, up the edges of walls and small patches of earth. I made discoveries about what grows wild in our city streets and focused my attention on the wonder of it all by drawing and painting my collections.

I encourage you to take a walk to respectfully gather a few flowers that you might usually dismiss as common or uninteresting. Please don't pick flowers without permission, that belong to a garden, or that appear scarce. If possible, work in situ, in front of the flower so that you do not have to remove it. STEPS:

1/ Gather together a collection of leftover paper to draw on (on the page opposite I used discarded graph paper). By using paper that already has marks on, that is slightly crumpled or stained we are less afraid of drawing on it: of 'messing it up'. This is a trick for removing some of the pressure of making a 'perfect' drawing.

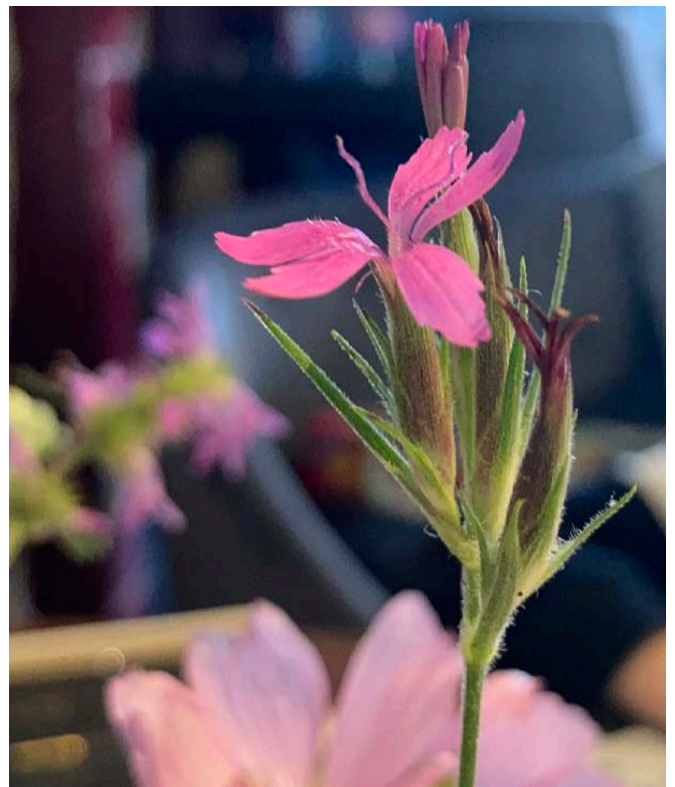
2/ Take the time to look at the distinct shapes of each flower: sharp, angular petals / soft, abundant blooms / tight, knotty buds. Make a line drawing that maps what you see.

You will work directly from the shapes you draw here in Exercise 2.

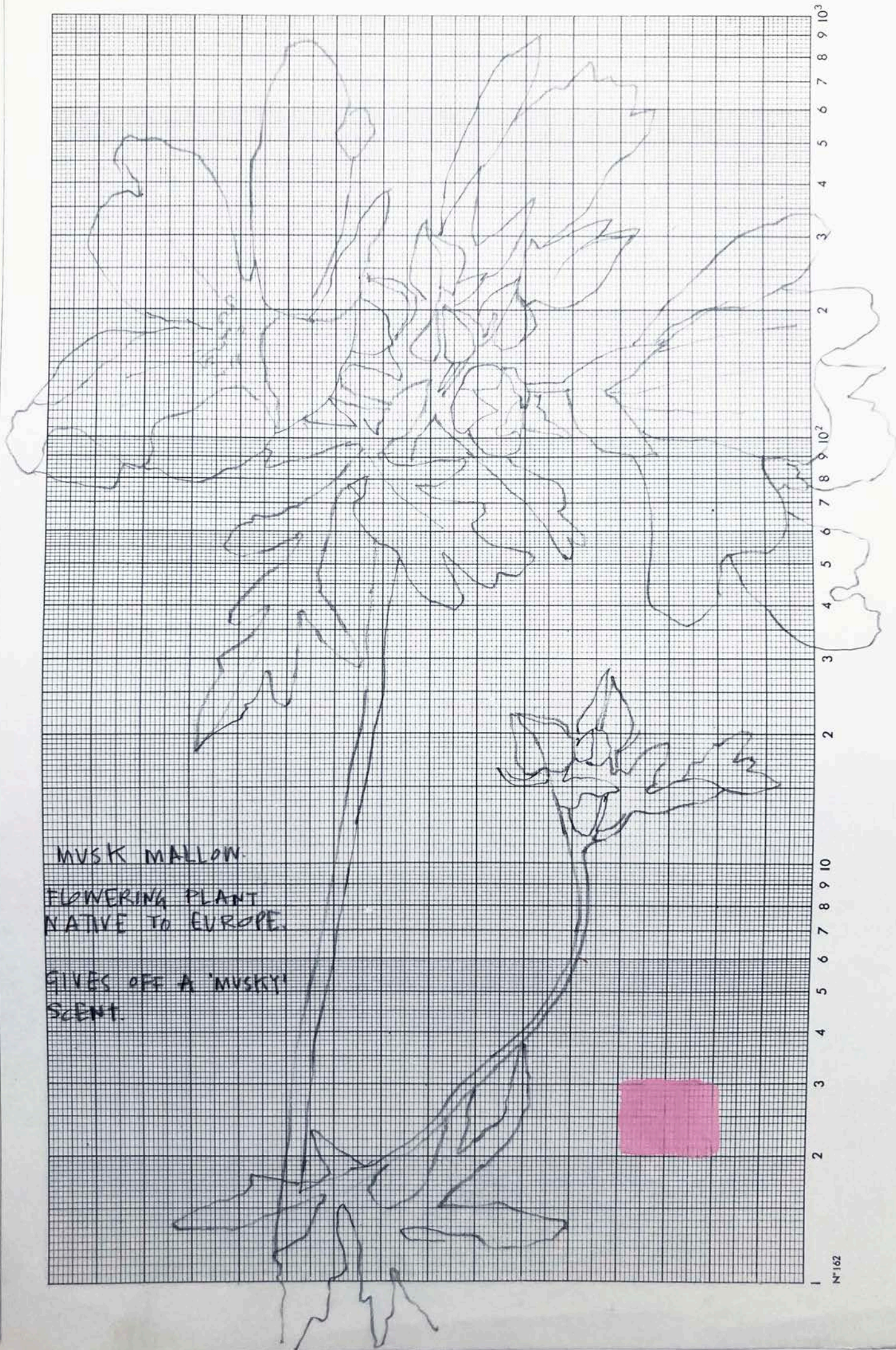
3/ Using a plant identifier app or dictionary of flowers, find out about your subject: its story, where it grows, its symbolism, scent, qualities, medicinal properties... and make notes.

4/ Also, use paint to mix a swatch of the petal's colour.

5/ You could continue this exercise by making a visual and written diary of the wild plants and flowers that you find around your home.



The flower in the photograph is called, 'Deptford Pink', a wildflower commonly found in distressed areas, along roadsides, tracks and woodland edges. It was once very common in Deptford, England.



MUSK MALLOW.  
FLOWERING PLANT  
NATIVE TO EUROPE.  
GIVES OFF A 'MUSKY'  
SCENT.

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# EXERCISE 2. Color Studies

The Japanese artist, teacher, costume and kimono designer Sanzo Wada (1883 - 1967) made incredible contributions to colour research. Some of this work can be found in: *A Dictionary of Color Combinations Vol I and II*, and online at: <https://sanzo-wada.dmbk.io/>

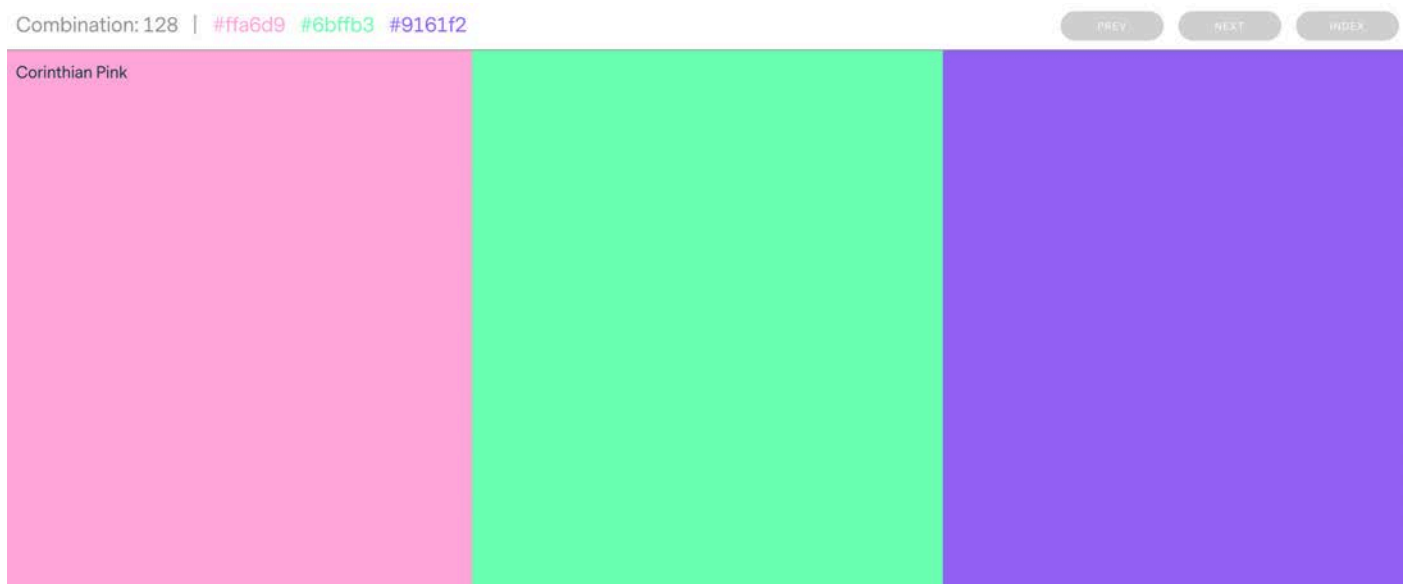
Here, I have used this generous resource as a starting point for a journey with colour that is outside of my habits or comfort zone. I encourage you to be playful and approach the exercise as light-heartedly as you would a game. It will be a game of discovery, an experience that I hope will influence your future painting and design work.

## STEPS:

- 1/ Make a tracing of a selected line drawing of a flower on tracing paper and transfer the silhouette to a thick piece of paper (180grams or +) or thin card
- 2/ Using the swatch of colour that you made from the flower's petal as a starting point, look at Sanzo Wada's colour combinations: the different colours that can marry with, or spark off each other.
- 3/ Carefully cut out your flower silhouette with scissors and/or a cutter and paint one side of it with the original petal colour.
- 4/ When dry turn the paper flower over and paint the other side with one paint the other side with one that Wada's see as a possible complement.
- 5/ Repeat these steps with other chosen flower forms and colours.
- 6/ On a sheet of paper, mix another colour that will act as the ground for your designs. When dry, you can paint the other side another colour from one of Wada's proposed combinations.
- 7/ Now you can play with placing your coloured flowers on the different coloured grounds in different combinations, alternating between overlapping and interlocking the forms.

Below: a screenshot from 'Wada Sanzo | A Dictionary of Color Combinations.'

## SWATCH VIEW





Grid of six patterns made by simply placing the painted flower shapes in different combinations. Long design, made digitally in order to start to explore symmetry.

## EXERCISE 3. Into Textiles



I've just recently started seriously working with textiles, it feels like a natural extension of my drawing practice. I am a beginner, a keen learner, but often frustrated by the limit of my skill. The ease and pleasure of a drawn line feels awkward and slow with needle and thread. But I persist, and by trying to understand why I keep going, I am gaining insight into what it takes to start to learn something new to you. It can be both thrilling and disheartening, and you have to keep trying.

Left: a photograph of my table with the collection of wild flowers I worked from in the previous pages, an in-progress embroidery of a tomato plant growing in our window box, and the beginnings of the design on the right.

Gather together scraps of fabric from old clothes, sheets, bags, from your home or second-hand stores. Try to find the a similar palette of colours as you found in the flowers and the Sanzo Wada studies. You will also need to find equivalent coloured threads and a simple sewing kit (needles, scissors). My design is a mixture of appliqué technique for the flowers and embroidery stitch for the leaves. I have listed on the back of the booklet links to the textile artists that I learn from. STEPS:

1/ Lay out the fabric that you want to use for the appliqué. I drew directly onto a dusky pink crepe fabric with pencil. I made four outlines of the '*Musk Mallow*' from slightly different angles. See the flower in the photograph above and in my pencil drawing in Exercise 1.

2/ Taking inspiration from the layout of Islamic garden design, I started to build the design organically, working loosely with symmetry and building outwards from a central focal point. In a paradise garden, the heart would be a fountain.

3/ I was lucky to have the time and opportunity to make this work outside, under the shade of trees. The leaf forms that protected me from the sun became the embroidered branches on the fabric. There was no preconceived plan, the work grew over a week with decisions made spontaneously

The bright yellow and blue flowers are made from small scraps of silk that I collect. I love that a tiny piece of valuable fabric, when handled with care, can be part of a transformation of another, more humble material: combining to make something new and precious.



Reasons for my motivation to work with textiles is that the process is slow, labour intensive, and I find my moving hands have the possibility of unlocking and unravelling my thoughts. Reflections on what a 'Paradise Garden' might mean to me was on my mind as I made this work.

Sitting in the shade, working with my hands, listening to the sound of the birds, watching the light shift and change through the leaves is calming, my tools for centering myself. I am both in a garden and making one: the embroidered fabric is growing on my lap. I make connections between what it takes for an artist to make an image and the work of a gardener. We both must partake in the dance between the will of the human hand and mind, and that of our tools and materials: the garden or the drawing shows us what it wants to be.

## ARTISTS

Sanzo Wada, Japanese artist, teacher, costume and kimono designer (1883 - 1967)

Anna Zemánková, self-taught Czech painter, draftswoman and pastel artist (1908 -1986)

## TEXTILES

Gillow, John and Barnard, Nicholas, '*Indian Textiles*', (Thames and Hudson, 2014)

@publiclibraryquilts

@zakfoster.quilts

@angelamaddock

## FLOWERS

Solnit, Rebecca, '*Orwell's Roses*' (Penguin, Forthcoming in Oct 2021)

## EXHIBITIONS

*The Power of My Hands, Afrique(s) : artistes femmes.* Museum of Modern Art, Paris (19th May to 22 August, 2021)

*Jennifer Packer: The Eye Is Not Satisfied With Seeing,* Serpentine Gallery, London (19th May to 22nd August, 2021)

## PLANTS AND ENVIRONMENT

Wall Kimmerer, Robin, '*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*', (Penguin, 2020)

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