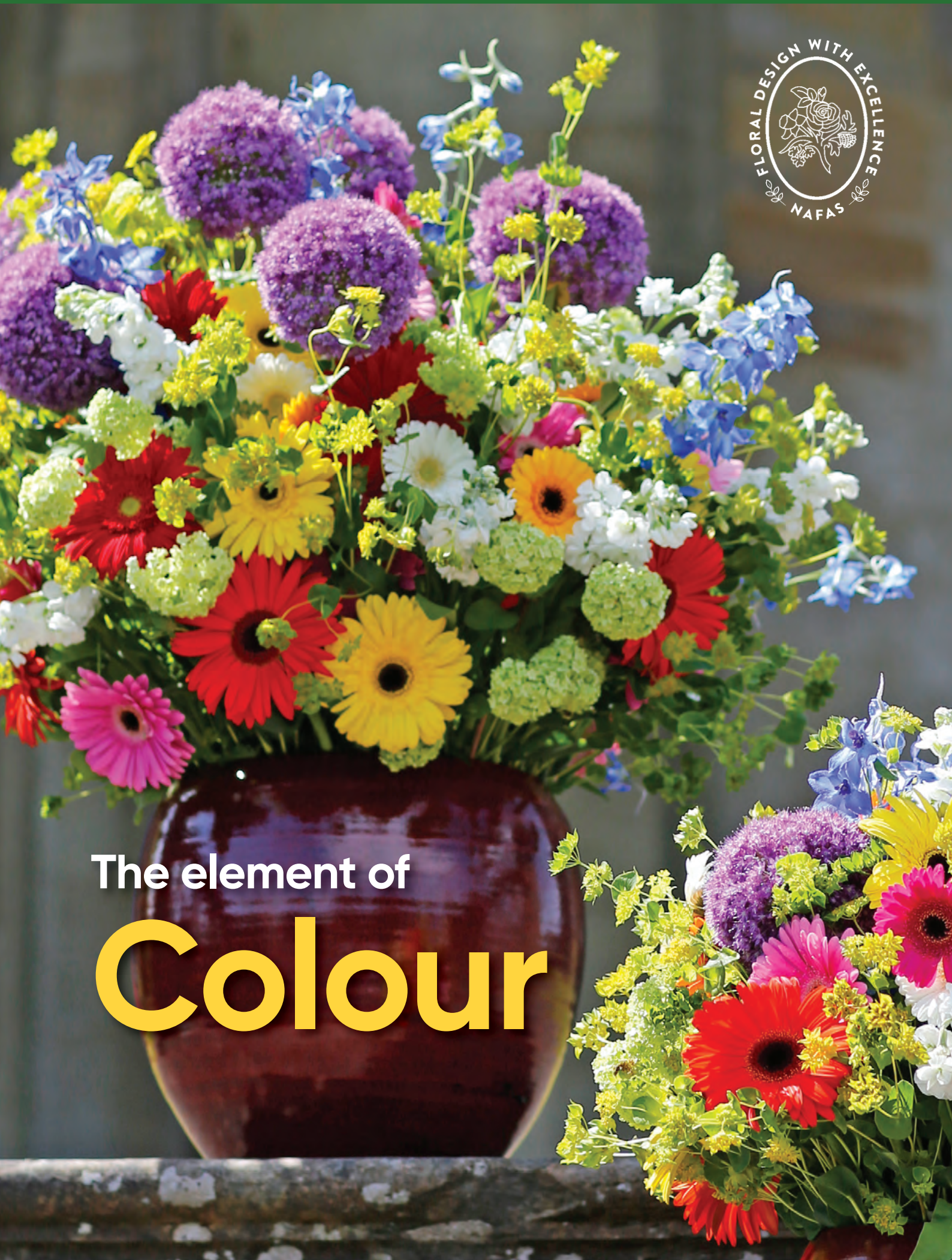




The element of
Colour



'Praise be to the palette for the delights it offers'.

WASSILY KANDINSKY

Colour abounds in nature and it is a highly expressive element of design to which the viewer responds immediately and spontaneously. The human eye experiences colour physically, mentally and emotionally and colour relationships present a compelling and exciting element to engage the senses of the floral artist. Flowers may have sublime shapes and scents but initially our senses respond to the subtleties of colour. It is emotive and personal, can be muted, intense, complex or illusionary and can be used to create mood, add interest, lend atmosphere or express the creative sensitivities of the arranger.

Knowledge of the theory of colour and an awareness of the effective use of this powerful element of design are invaluable to the flower arranger. White light, when broken by a prism, reveals a continuous spectrum of colour, as in a rainbow. The spectrum is represented in six distinct bands of red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. By joining the two ends of the bands, a circle is formed, creating a colour wheel with the three equidistant **primary** colours of red, yellow and blue. **Secondary** colours are orange, violet and green – a mixture of any two primary colours. Yellow/orange, red/orange, red/violet, blue/violet, blue/green and yellow/green are **tertiary** colours.

Monochromatic colour schemes are related tints, tones and shades of one colour.

Analogous schemes include two or more colours lying adjacent on the colour wheel but not more than one primary colour is included in this scheme. **Complementary** colours are those positioned opposite each other on the colour wheel. In **polychromatic** colour schemes where many different hues are combined together, harmony is more difficult to achieve unless tints and tones are used.

Hue is the full intensity of one colour as distinct from another colour.

Chroma is the degree of intensity used to differentiate between a bright colour and a duller colour of the same hue.

Value is the lightness or darkness of a colour.

Each colour is further defined by the qualities of tint, tone or shade of which there are many.

Tint is a hue with white added,

Tone is a hue with grey added,

Shade is a hue with black added.



The colour wheel

- The first outer ring is the pure colour
- The second ring is a tint
- The third ring is a tone
- The fourth inner ring is a shade

Colour does not exist in isolation and interacts visually with other colours in a design. Proximity to another colour may alter the perception of that colour, yellow flowers placed beside purple ones appear lighter and more brilliant and the purple appears darker and richer. Bright red vibrates when placed beside yellow green. Equal amounts of two strong colours can confuse the eye by vying for attention and successful combinations often depend on the correct proportions. Green foliage calms and soothes and creates areas of rest for the eye from the vibrancy of bright colours. Grey foliage has the power to make pastel tints more intense and to neutralise stronger tones and help brighter colours to blend together. Warm advancing colours are red to orange to yellow, cool receding colours are green to blue to violet. Warm colours appear hotter when placed near cool colours.

Lighter tints appear larger in size and lighter in weight. Darker shades appear smaller in size and heavier in weight and dark tones give depth to a design. Colours appear most normal against a grey background. Colour can contribute to the development of rhythm with repetition encouraging the eye to travel through the design.



Arranger: Valerie Guest
Photograph: Valerie Guest

Effective use of colour can be an essential feature in expressing ideas and furthering the theme in interpretative exhibits with a change in value or intensity further refining a meaning. Colour can stimulate and create a variety of emotions in the viewer with dark colours portraying an introspective or sombre mood, yellow a feeling of gaiety and light values suggesting an up-beat mood. Loud colours stimulate rather than soothe, and strong, bold colours can convey excitement or drama. Cool and subdued colours are more passive and generate an atmosphere of tranquillity or contemplation, however, colour associations have both positive and negative connotations.

Yellow may convey cowardice or sunshine,
Blue peace or depression,
Purple opulence or decadence,
Green harmony or envy,
Orange vibrancy or loudness,
Black sophistication or evil,
White simplicity or isolation,
Grey wisdom or sadness,
Red passion or aggression.

Colour can be used to convey the spirit of the age in period arrangements – the polychromatic jewel colours of the 16th Century Tudor times, the pastel tints of the Rococo period or the dark tones of the Victorian age.



The strong colours of the Victorian age convey the spirit of the era

Arranger: Katherine Kear
Photograph: Katherine Kear

Strong contrasts provide immediate visual impact in modern designs and unbroken areas of colour are a strong design feature in contemporary designs. Pure colour is often used in abstract designs to create movement or drama with dyed or painted plant material enhancing a design if used with discernment.



Arranger: Eileen Barraclough
Photograph: Chrissie Harten

Colour, with all the sensations and emotions that it arouses, is often the most exciting element of a design and a carefully controlled colour harmony with mellow or modified hues can be as equally arresting as a strong blending of colours. Inspiration for the effective use of

colour can come from observing nature throughout the seasons with endless pleasure being derived by the floral artist from experimenting with colour and the fascinating array of tints, tones and shades that are to be found in nature's palette.

Mission Statement

The National Association of Flower Arrangement Societies (NAFAS) is an educational charity dedicated to the promotion of the artistic use of all types of plant material through the medium of its flower clubs for both adults and children.

NAFAS is concerned about the environment and members uphold the principles of conservation and preservation of rare and endangered plants and flowers.

With over 961 clubs and in the region of 45,000 members throughout the United Kingdom, NAFAS is in a unique position to encourage the art of flower arranging through demonstrations, classes, exhibitions, festivals and show work.

NAFAS is affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society and is a founder member of the World Association of Flower Arrangers.



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