



SIMPLY RED

STORY **MARION TYREE MAILDM, MAIH**

Colour is one of the basic elements of landscape design. It goes hand in hand with line, form, scale and texture. Part of the use of colour is to give balance and focus to the design. Colour also draws the eye towards an object. Placement of plants, their flower and foliage colours can be used to enhance the garden's proportion and balance. Because of its bold stand out and look-at-me effect, red in the landscape creates a focal point.



Red draws the eye towards the statues. Monastery Courtyard, Red Cow farm.

Photo: Marion Tyree (**above**)
Red *Anigozanthos* against a foil of blue-grey foliage makes a welcoming entrance in the native garden of Tamara and Ian Cox in Sydney's northwest.

Photo: Catherine Stewart (**left**)

In a serene garden the cool colours dominate; shades of greens, blue and violet, pale pink and white. If you want to stimulate the senses use red combined with orange and yellow, the hot colours. Red looks its most vibrant against green, its complementary colour. Silver will calm it down and white makes a cool contrast.

However, be warned, red should be used with great care. It is such a strong attractant in a garden that it's important to always have your red-flowering plants well-groomed as they will be very noticeable if they're not.

RED FOR GARDENS

Red flowers can be divided into two shades; "The scarlets and vermilions verge towards the yellow section of the colour wheel, whereas the crimsons, with a touch of blue are on the cooler violet side" (Lawson). Popular in the deeper burgundy reds are *Cordylines*, *Phormiums*, *Lorapetalum rubrum* or *L.* 'China Pink' and *Agonis flexuosa* 'After Dark'. They are massed planted to give effect and they do. But perhaps not the effect you really

want. Often strappy red foliated plants en masse or the deep red-black of *Aeonium arboretum* 'Zwartkop' are used because they are the 'In Thing' and clients want them. They can be seen everywhere, massed planted, especially in our new 'Outdoor Living' gardens.

Splashes of red in the garden are very effective, but less is better according to Christopher Lloyd who says: "Large blocks of undiluted red are a mistake; indigestible as swallowing a lump of uncooked dough". Andrew Lawson agrees stating: "...as an occasional touch of brilliant colour, red flowers can give weight to a planting, spicing up neighbouring colours that might otherwise appear insipid". Large scale municipal plantings of annuals often use red sometimes with rather garish results. Although red, orange and yellow are harmonious colours on the colour wheel, municipal plantings with masses of *Salvia splendens* planted alongside orange marigolds does not look good! It is the contrast of the bright red and orange that offends the eye creating a "colour shock". (Lawson)

Perhaps it is our hot dry climate that prevents designers from using bright red flowering plants. Too loud and garish maybe, as too much red in a garden can feel 'hot' and unwelcoming. But Lawson says that in hot countries the sun in summer creates such a harsh light that: "powerful colour statements are needed, with bold unsaturated colours arranged in vibrant contrasts". Shape, density and texture are important as well. Try combining the red flowers of *Grevillea* 'Canberra Gem' with a lime green *Euphorbia* and adding a touch of silver with *Leucophyta brownii*. Or if using dark red burgundy foliage add some bright green leaves and a hint of yellow flowers amongst the foliage.

Red can be used in many situations to lift the garden up a notch. This does not necessarily have to be a plant but can be a red painted structure, an obelisk or garden ornament. Plant red flowers or foliage to 'pull in' the end of a long narrow garden or place a statue in front of a red painted wall.

In formal gardens, red tulips planted surrounded by green hedges can be very striking. As a climber over a fence or arch the new *Rosa* 'Red Pierre' is outstanding as are many red climbing roses. If you have a large garden *Brachychiton acerifolius* looks wonderful planted with *Jacaranda mimosifolia*. Many Australian native rainforest species have vibrant red new growth. Several also have very attractive red berries eg *Cryptocarya*, *Alyxia*, *Cassine*, *Cordyline petiolaris* and *Sarcopteryx*.

OTHER FACTS ABOUT RED

- Red is the colour with the longest wavelength. As we age we lose our sensitivity to red first.
- Red is busy, vibrant, exciting, dominating and stimulating (including to the appetite)
- Red gives us courage and strength, stability and security. People who like red are often courageous, confident and natural leaders. They can also be ruthless, domineering and quick tempered.
- Many other cultures have more than one word for red.
- Light affects our perception of red – bright light makes it really zing but in shade it can look dull and drab.
- Our eyes have more colour receptors for hot colours like red and yellow which is why they look especially vibrant to us.
- Red often means danger or sex in the animal kingdom (including humans – think red lipstick and fast cars which always seem to go even faster if they're red).
- Most red-flowering plants are pollinated by birds so will attract them to your garden.
- For the Chinese, red means good luck.





1 Position *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop' where the light will shine through to bring out the vibrant red in the leaves. Margery Postlethwaite's garden. Photo Maria von Brincken (Member APLD) 2 Red berries on *Ardisia* stand out well against its deep green foliage. Margery Postlethwaite's garden. Photo Maria von Brincken (Member APLD) 3 *Sedum* sp. 4 *Chaenomeles speciosa* 5 *Teloepa speciosissima* 6 Red leaves of *Iresine* lighten up a shady spot. 7 *Iresine* with *Plectranthus* 8 *Berberis thunbergii* cv 9 Autumn foliage 10 Autumn foliage *Acer* sp 11 *Brachychiton acerifolius* with *Jacaranda mimosifolia* Photo Marion Tyree 12 *Acmena* 'Allyn Magic' Photo Alpine Nurseries 13 Balcony Garden with rare *Tropaeolum* sp. 14 *Grevillea* 'Molly' 15 *Anthurium andraeanum* Photo Helen Thompson 16 *Caesalpinia pucherrima* Photo Helen Thompson 17 Richly coloured leaves on *Codeaium* (commonly called Coleus) are a popular source of red in sub-tropical gardens. Photo Catherine Stewart 18 'Australian Inspiration' at Chelsea, designed by Jim Fogarty. Carefully placed tubs filled with a vibrant red *Callistemon* lead the eye around this otherwise mostly silver and blue garden as well as picking up the warm tones of the timber stack wall. Photo Catherine Stewart 19 *Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra' 20 *Dianthus* 21 *Dahlia* cv. 22 New red growth of *Photinia* sp 23 The glossy red bracts of these vibrant *Guzmania* bromeliads attracts attention even in the shade. Photo Catherine Stewart





Red used unwisely can really distract from planned focal points. In this Japanese inspired design at Capel Manor (UK), the garden becomes much too busy as the lantern and crane sculpture focal points are overwhelmed by the red-painted bridge and red foliage plants. **(top left)** With white to take the vibrancy out of these cool reds but lots of green to still give the red some 'zing', this garden successfully plays the colour game both ways. Design by Giselle Barron & Harriette Rowe of Patio at Sydney In Bloom 2003. Photo Catherine Stewart **(above)** Cordyline colour is at its most brilliant as the light shines through. Grouped red foliage works well with plenty of green in Helen Curran's Tropical Breeze garden. Photo Maria von Brincken (Member APLD) **(far left)** Monochromatic planting is not to everyone's taste. Garden at Ellerslie Flower Show Photo Annette Stapleton **(left)**

RED PLANTS FOR THE GARDEN: PERENNIALS

Lychnis chalcedonica,
Lobelia cardinalis
Paeonia officinalis 'Rubra Plena'
Geranium phaeum
Pelargonium Hybrid Cultivars
Pentas lanceolata 'New Look Red'
Monarda didyma
Penstemon barbatus
Verbena x hybrida 'Lawrence Johnston'
Euphorbia griffithii 'Fireglow'
Heuchera sanguinea
Monarda didyma 'Cambridge Scarlet'
Potentilla atrosanguinea
Celosia argentea (cockscomb)
Alstroemeria hybrids (Peruvian lily)
Papaver (poppy)
Knautia cvs
Justicia brandegeana (shrimp plant)
Heliconia spp
Gerbera cvs
Aechmea cvs
Acalypha hispida (red-hot cat tail)
Vriesia cvs

BULBS

Canna
Crocsmia
Haemanthus multiflorus
Hippeastrum puniceum.
Ranunculus
Lilium spp
Tulipa cvs

CLIMBERS

Rosa 'Amadeus'
Rosa 'Dublin Boy'
Rosa 'Veilchenblau'
Rosa 'Pillar Box'
Rosa 'Bloomfield Courage'
Bougainvillea x buttiana 'Scarlet O'Hara'
Kennedia rubicundra
Clerodendrum splendens
Lapageria rosea (Chilean Bell Flower)
Passiflora (passionfruit)

SHRUBS

Calliandra tweedii
Callistemon spp.
Camellia
Grevillea spp.
Chaenomeles
Fuchsia
Euphorbia pulcherrima
Telopea specioissima
Feijoa sellowiana
Odontonema strictum
Protea
Euphorbia millii
Rhododendron Vireya group
Rhododendron lochiae
Eremophila spp
Hakea laurina and *H. purpurea*
Kunzea baxteri
Lambertia spp (mountain devil)
Blandfordia spp (Christmas bell)
Melaleuca spp
Calothamnus spp
Darwinia spp

Doryanthes excelsa (Gynea lily)
Banksia coccinea
Beaufortia spp
Swainsonia Formosa (Sturt's desert pea)
Anigozanthos cvs
Brachysema spp
Russellia
Correa reflexa
Mussaenda erythrophylla
Leucospermum spp (pincushion)
Metrosideros spp (NZ Christmas tree)
Hibiscus cvs
Adenanthos obovata (basket flower)
Leea rubra

TREES

Brachychiton acerifolius
Callistemon viminalis
Crataegus laevigata 'Paulii'
Corymbia ficifolia
Eucalyptus leucoxylon 'Rosea'
Malus 'Profusion'
Stenocarpus sinuatus
Spathodea campanulata
Delonix regia
Alloxylon (tree waratah)
Syzygium wilsonii
Ceratopetalum gummiferum (NSW Christmas bush)
Schefflera actinophylla

RED LEAVES

Acer cvs
Acmena 'Allyn Magic' and 'Hot

Flush'

Corymbia (new growth)
Codiaeum variegatum cvs (croton)
Cordyline
Hakea victoriae (Royal hakea)
Chambeyronia (flamethrower palm)
Pieris cvs
Photinia x fraseri 'Red Robyn'

AUTUMN LEAVES

Nyssa sylvatica
Quercus (pinoak)
Parthenocissus
Sorbus (rowan)
Vitis (grapevine)
Euonymus elatus (spindle tree)

RED STEMS

Cornus alba (red barked dogwood)
Acer spp.

RED BERRIES

Ardisia crenata
Alyxia ruscifolia
Linosyadix monostachys (walking stick palm)
Cotoneaster horizontalis
Apples
Chillies
Tomatoes
Capsicums
Strawberries
Cordyline petiolaris
Malus sieboldii 'Gorgeous' (crabapple)