



Dreaming in Color
by Dianne Reitan

This time of the year, we nest inside our warm homes knowing we are months away from planting our gardens. But we use our down time to enthusiastically start marking up our seed catalogs and contemplate which dahlia varieties we may want to add to our collection. Some relish the competition and mark their calendars and try to snag a coveted dahlia form and color when a farm opens their online sales on a specific date and time. And I see many comments on social media from folks that are sitting out the dahlia wars and will get the tubers they need to fill their beds on their own terms - if they get the tried and true 'old fashioned' ones that are easier to buy, sometimes cheaper and just as beautiful, well so be it. Thank goodness we can find out which growers have what we want through DAHLIAaddict.com.

One of the things I'm doing this winter is deepening my knowledge of flower color. When I graduated with my multimedia graphic design degree in May 2023 (the same month I started my dahlia farm), one of my favorite classes was Color Theory. My professor, a well-known comic book illustrator, was edgy and a bit cocky, as you might expect, but he was a great teacher and he knew color. Hue, chroma and value. Projects assigned focused on different color schemes: Accent Color, Analogous, Complementary, Monochromatic, Rainbow, Transitional, and Triadic. And, of course, cool palettes vs. warm palettes.



**'THIS IS THE PANTONE
BOOK OF FLOWERS.'**

— NEW YORK POST

**Flower Color Theory and Flower Color Guide
by Taylor and Michael Putnam**

To my delight, I recently found a pair of books (and a third children's book I'm gifting to my 5-year old second cousin) by Taylor and Michael Putnam. Their floral work can be found in fashion shows and *Town & Country* and they have created two easy-to-use reference books with removable swatches. Flower Color Theory includes 175 flower arrangements, each built around the aforementioned color schemes. "Following a color scheme can help you decide where to take your arrangement...can help set the overall emotional tone of your arrangement." The Putnams go on to show through their gorgeous photography how flowers fall into four groups: face, filler, textural and gestural. And, yes, they use a lot of dahlias!



You may recall my article on arranging that I wrote last spring, where I shared my affinity for design that uses less greenery filler so that my dahlias are the star. But the Putnams have given me an actual strategy: assign principal roles to two stems that represent different sides of the color spectrum and then build on those using color. Add more stems of different tones and shades, focusing on the in-between. "When we design, our goal is to gradate colors and avoid what we call the polka-dot school of flower arranging. Instead, we focus attention on all the colors in between the two flowers at either end of the color spectrum of the arrangement." In addition, creating an arrangement that starts with two flowers in two shades produce a transitional effect between them and when you add a dark punctuation to a simple arrangement it can make it more interesting and dynamic. No wonder I get giddy reading through these pages. I love gradients and anything

ombre, and these floral designs inspire me rather than make me want to dis-arrange the composition.



Removable swatches from the book, *Flower Color Theory*

You probably heard that the 2025 Pantone Color of the Year is Mocha Mousse. The Garden Guy, Norman Winter, hasn't found any brown flowers that are alive but he did suggest that gardeners could incorporate this warm and inviting color through their foliage choices. He agreed with Kate Spirgen with Proven Winners that Sweet Caroline Red Hawk sweet potato, Dolce Toffee Tart heuchera and Toffee Twist Carex grass are some excellent performers and on trend. Mr. Winter writes through the Tribune News Service, "The Garden Guy is not the only one carrying the banner for Pantone's Mocha Mousse. The lady of the house, known as Jan My Love Winter, has incorporated this welcoming color throughout our home." Ah, indeed. Dave and I decorated our home as newlyweds almost 15 years ago with a darker, Tuscan flair, not caring if our home decor was considered outdated by some. It's nice to see the pendulum swing back and know all the different tones of browns and woods throughout our house is now in vogue. (By the way the Putnams do show how to incorporate brown into a flower arrangement by using foliage like dried banana leaves, Corkscrew hazel, and Teasel.)

As I wait for spring to come in the Rocky Mountains, one of the sites I'm checking every week is the post office for the release date of their new stamp of dahlias! You can click on the photo below to be taken directly to the USPS.



Dahlias

First Day of Issue Date: TBA

First Day of Issue Location: TBA



Dahlia Talk Co-Authors
Martin Kral and Dianne Reitan
at the Rocky Reach Dam in Wenatchee, WA



[American Dahlia Society](#)

