

# Picking Paint

## LET NATURE BE YOUR GUIDE

When the urge for a home colour makeover becomes more than a passing fancy, it's a good sign it's time to pay attention to your feelings! Colour is a powerful tool, communicating to us in ways as recognizable as a red flag to a bull or as silent as white noise. Most of us know we have feelings about colour, but interestingly, we are not always aware of where these feelings come from and how to interpret them into "happy palettes" for our homes. What's more, we're often fooled into believing that answers to our challenges are in the latest trends. However, there's much more to getting our colours right than you might realize.

BY IRENE TURNBULL

From birth we learn to associate colour with our beliefs and values based on our life experiences. The ability to distinguish colour has evolved into a language enabling us to express our physical and emotional feelings and maintain a sense of community order. We evaluate the safety of our food, detect signs of danger like bee and wasp stings and engage colour language to express our feelings, both physical and emotional. It's easy to see why CAUTION signs are yellow and black. Our ability to discern colour is inherent in our survival instincts. Because the language of colour follows patterns and assumptions of culture at large, a great deal of generalization creeps into the interpretation and sometimes we mistake these as fact. While brides in North America might be convinced that white is right, those taking vows in China and other countries adorn themselves in brilliant reds and other significant colours. When it comes to colour in our homes, we know that one size doesn't fit all, yet we're often influenced by the wrong colour information.

So where do you go for help? Back to your instincts. Let nature be your guide, because no matter what your preference, you can rely on nature's great colour sense whatever the canvas!! Mother Nature knows what combinations go together in what proportions and somehow manages to keep it fresh and changing. Trust the feelings she imparts in you. Here's how to get started:

- 1 Not everyone sees the same light rays so we don't all see the same colours. Light isn't static; follow its patterns from morning to night, season to season to experience the natural shift in colour that takes place from the monochromatic silhouettes of dawn and dusk through the different tints and shades of daylight.
- 2 Take note of seasonal and indigenous colour blends. Green is nature's neutral, filling the gaps and softening the edges. Green comes in every shade for every environment but never upstages the showy colours of flowers and wildlife it supports. Nature is ever changing but remains consistent in her choice of colour palettes. It satisfies our need for surprise with the cheer of a bright red cardinal or Blue Jay against the monochromatic background of winter's black and white and just when you think you can't take another grey day, the sun will shine.
- 3 The elements of nature are fire, earth, metal, water and wood. Their qualities – shape, texture and colour – influence our feelings of safety, comfort and support and can be easily transported to do the same in our homes. The surface of an object either reflects or absorbs light, so it's critical to pay attention to whether it is shiny or matte, textured or smooth. Light travels in straight lines, so shapes will cause shadows and colour to appear differently in the same setting.
- 4 We experience life by contrast and identify shades of colour by their association to one another. Note nature's use of colour contrast to camouflage or accentuate – like deer in the forest or butterflies to flowers. What do you want to dominate your colour scheme and draw attention to?

Getting in touch with your natural colour feelings could be one of the greatest gifts you give yourself, because getting it right makes everything feel better. **OH**

