

Painting Guidance

Materials

Most botanical work is completed in watercolour. Traditionally watercolour has been used as it is known for letting the white of the paper underneath shine through, therefore giving the plant brighter, more life-like qualities. Pen and ink or graphite studies are commonly used where colour does not need to be recorded. It is important to remember that whichever medium you choose the end result must be able to last in the archive for future generations without fading. Artists' quality materials are recommended.

For watercolour painting, good-quality acid-free watercolour paper is best. This should be hot-pressed (HP) for a flat painting surface that allows small detail to be captured. Heavier paper (140lb/300gsm or heavier) is more expensive but will wear better in the long run and will not buckle when wet washes are applied.

Paper/image sizes

When planning your composition you will need to bear in mind the standard work sizes which the Society uses. This allows the Florilegium work to be exhibited in standard size frames which can be re-used. There are two sizes: large is 500mm x 400mm and small is 300mm x 210mm. This would be the window size of a frame and mount and the whole image should fit within it; anything extending outside of this space would not be seen. Whether to use the space portrait or landscape will depend on the plant and how you are depicting it. Most artists find it helpful to lightly pencil in the working area of the composition before starting. Additionally, paper sizes above 600mm x 430mm cannot be stored in the Florilegium solander boxes in the archive and should therefore be avoided.

Planning your composition

You will need to research your chosen species first in order to plan which parts of the plant need to be recorded, either for interest, to define the species as distinct from others or to illustrate the mechanisms of reproduction. The library in the Eden Foundation Building is a valuable resource which is open to the public. Mally Francis holds a selection of books at her studios at Heligan, available for Florilegium members to use by prior arrangement. Ros Franklin also holds a large selection in her studio in Dorset for those outside Cornwall.

If cuttings from plants at Eden are needed then this can be arranged in liaison with the Eden Green Team. If you buy or collect your own specimens please make sure that they are representative of the species and not a cultivar (unless this is required) or grown in an environment not typical to the species, as this can change the appearance of the plant dramatically.

Details

Often several stages in a plant's cycle need to be shown. This is commonly done with botanical details being depicted separately from the main image, for example, close-ups of details such as seeds or stamens. Jenny Brasier, our President, and Sarah Gould, one of our assessors, have given some guidance on when and how these details should be included:

Details should not be put on as an afterthought – or look as though they have been. Decide before starting your composition whether or not details are to be included.

The decision is based on:

- a) Personal choice.
- b) Whether or not additional details are necessary to explain important parts of the plant, possibly key to identification, which would otherwise be unclear or unseen.
- c) Whether they will complement and balance the composition.
- d) Whether they can be executed confidently and competently.

If, based on the above, you decide to include details then:

- i) They should be part of your initial planning.
- ii) Accurate studies should be made right at the start of the work to record required details i.e. flower parts, before they deteriorate.
- iii) If possible, have details checked by a botanist before committing to finished work.
- iv) If you are not confident or competent, they may be done on a separate sheet if necessary (this separate sheet must be fully labelled).
- v) Draw on tracing paper first in order to place appropriately – preferably at the bottom of the painting.
- vi) Line up details and any labelling/sizing – which must be correct.
- vii) Details should be done in pencil (not too dark) or watercolour. Keep a record of all colours used.
- viii) If for publication or reproduction, use scale instead of a multiplier.
- ix) Explanation of which parts of the plant have been shown should be written in pencil on the back of the picture.

GUIDANCE FOR ASSESSMENT DAY SUBMISSIONS

When your illustration is completed it should be submitted at the next Annual General Meeting. The work should be clearly labelled on the back with your name, date, plant details (i.e. plant family, plant genus, plant species and cultivar if appropriate), accession number, location, and also your own number depending on how many pieces of work you have done (e.g.1,2,3). Work can be signed on the front as long as the signature or monogram is unobtrusive and does not disrupt the composition. You will also need to submit your herbarium specimen and any supplementary notes. Please bring them in protective sleeves and, if you are re-submitting work, please remember to bring along your assessment comments with your adjusted painting.

The work is assessed by the panel, usually the day after the AGM. Our panel currently comprises two accomplished botanical artists, Helen Allen and Sarah Gould, and a botanist from Eden. The assessment is rigorous, discussion is intense and work is only accepted if it is of a very high standard.

Each painting is reviewed individually and paintings are vetted on their own individual merit, not against one another. The panel assess both the botanical accuracy and standard of painting/drawing. As these paintings might be used for scientific research it is of the greatest importance that the botany should be entirely accurate including colour, form, habit, flowering and fruiting cycles, where it is possible to show them, and all diagnostic classifying features. The painting should clearly show the form of the plant being portrayed without ambiguities and have no need to rely on further explanation.

All work should be the artists' own and although it is acceptable to research using others' photographs, drawings or paintings from books or the internet, artists must take every care to ensure that these are not copied into the final piece in any way. It is the individual artist's responsibility to make sure that copyright law is adhered to. Artists are encouraged to submit supporting notes, photographs and sketches to confirm that work is original and research is thorough and accurate.

At the end of assessment the panel complete an assessment sheet with their comments which aim to be helpful and constructive. Letters confirming the outcome of assessment and the assessment sheet with comments will be sent to the artist.

Assessment of paintings for the archives

There are four outcomes:

1) Accepted to the archives

As well as your acceptance letter and assessment sheet you will be sent documentation to complete in order to donate your work to the Eden Project. Your work will be scanned and will remain in the archive cupboards in the Foundation Building at Eden. Once donated, the Eden Project is free to use the painting/image to help its work as an educational charity, although copyright of the image remains with the artist and you may also continue to use the image.

2) Accepted with minor amendments

Sometimes work is accepted for the archive but the panel requests that minor amendments or 'tweaks' are made to the image first. In this instance the work is returned

to the artist or the artist is requested to collect the work from the Eden Project. When the amendments have been made the artist will need to check these with one of the botanical art tutors, after which it can go straight into the archive, without re-assessment by the panel. The painting can then be scanned and will remain in the archive cupboards in the Foundation Building at Eden. As well as your acceptance (with amendments) letter and assessment sheet you will be sent documentation to complete in order to donate your work to the Eden Project. As above, once donated, the Eden Project is free to use the painting/image to help its work as an educational charity, although copyright of the image remains with the artist and you may also continue to use the image.

3) Request for Resubmission

Occasionally the panel decide the image needs major amendments or additions. In this case the work will be returned to the artist or the artist will be requested to collect it from the Eden Project. The letter requesting resubmission and the assessment sheet detailing what needs to be done will be sent to the artist. When the artist has made the amendments the painting is returned to be re-assessed by the panel at the next AGM the following year, when it will undergo the same assessment process once again.

4) Not accepted

If the painting does not meet the very high standard set for the archives, or the work does not accurately portray the plant and could not meet these requirements even with additional work the painting is not accepted. Work that is not accepted will be returned to the artist or the artist will be requested to collect it from the Eden Project. The letter stating that the painting has not been accepted and the assessment sheet with the comments explaining why will be sent to the artist. Although this can be disappointing we need to remember just how high the standards of the Florilegium are.

Painting members are encouraged to submit work every year if possible, ensuring that they retain their painting status, even when submission to the archive is not successful. The effort put into work for the Florilegium is greatly appreciated and every piece completed adds to our own experience as botanical artists, so keep painting.

Assessment to become a painting member

Applicants to become painting members must submit five pieces of work to be assessed by the panel. The panel will look for potential and the paintings will not be assessed as if they were being submitted for the archives. However, this is a submission to a Florilegium Society where accuracy is important and applicants must demonstrate good botanical observation as well as a high standard of artistic skill.

After assessment a letter stating acceptance or not will be sent to the artist with an assessment sheet detailing the panel's comments.

If an applicant submits paintings that are not all of the same high standard then they might be accepted with the proviso that they work to the high standard of a particular painting. There will always be encouragement but we need to maintain high standards. It is very much hoped that if an applicant is not accepted they will submit again when they have produced further work. Painting for a Florilegium Society can be demanding but it is certainly achievable.