

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. Florilegium artists commonly use Arches or Fabriano Artístico papers which are available in art shops or from online suppliers.

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 also holds a selection of books at her studios at Heligan, available for Florilegium members to use by prior arrangement.

If cuttings from plants at Eden are needed then this can be arranged in liaison with the Eden Green Team. Please contact Sarah Loftis at Eden in the first instance (email: sloftis@edenproject.com tel: 01726 818834).

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.

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. Two of our assessors, Jenny Brasier and Sarah Gould, 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) Do on tracing paper first to place – 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.

Submission of work

When your illustration is completed it should be submitted at the next Annual General Meeting which would be held in January of the following year. The work should be clearly labelled 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). 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 the day after the AGM. Our panel currently comprises two accomplished botanical artists, Jenny Brasier and Sarah Gould, and Eden's Curator of Horticultural Science, Dr. Alistair Griffiths. The assessment is rigorous and work is only accepted if it is a very high standard.

If your work is accepted you will be notified with a letter and an assessment sheet with comments from the panel. You will also be sent documentation to complete in order to donate your work to the Eden Project. Your work is then scanned and placed 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.

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 with the necessary paperwork and then brought back by the artist to be scanned and entered into the archive when the amendments have been made.

Occasionally the panel decide the image needs major amendments or additions. In this case the work will be returned to the artist with the comments sheet, requesting that further work is done and that the illustration is returned to be re-assessed at the next AGM the following year, when it will undergo the same assessment process once again.

Work that is not accepted will be returned to the artist with the comments sheet explaining why the illustration was not suitable for the archive. 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!