

# Compelling Color Combinations in Desert Gardens

Angelica Elliott, Program Development Manager

# Learning Objectives

Apply color into their gardens to create pleasing color combinations and color harmony.

# Color In Your Garden

Color is the most noticeable and memorable element in landscape design.

Color is part of the elements of design and must be used in conjunction with other design elements.



# Color In Your Garden : Plants

**Color is found in the flowers, foliage, bark and fruit of plants.**

**Color in plants can be temporary changing during the seasons.**



# Color In Your Garden : Hardscape

**Color is found in  
structures, walls,  
accessories,  
pavers, furniture,  
etc.**



# Plant Combinations

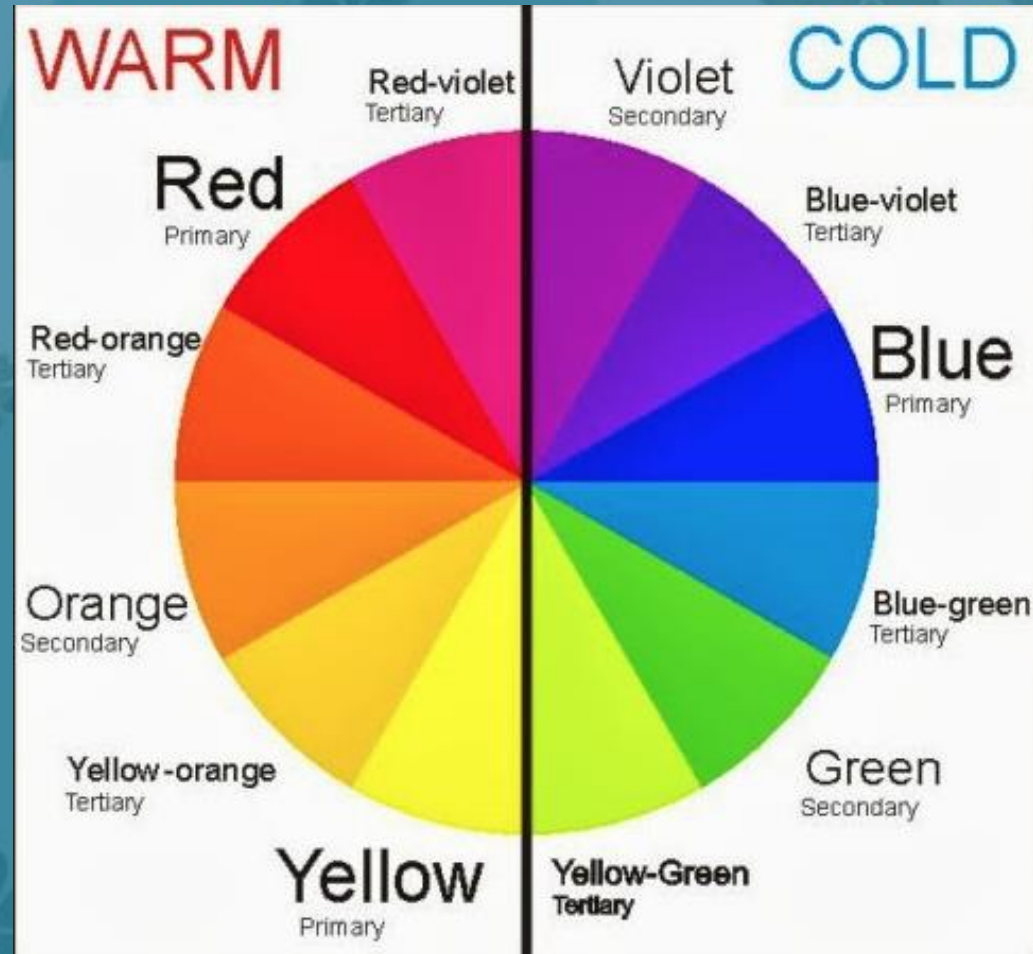
**Consider the following:**

- **Light requirements**
- **Space requirements**
- **Water requirements**
- **Bloom times**



# Color Theory and Color Wheel

Color theory is used to explain the relationship of colors in nature, the color wheel and how they should be used in a composition.



# Color Theory and Color Wheel

## Cool Colors

- Lengthen the view of the landscape
- Sense of peacefulness and tranquility
- Can make a hot area seem cooler



# Color Theory and Color Wheel

## Warm Colors

- Move toward the viewer
- Give the feeling of warmth, stimulation
- Can make an area without much sunlight appear brighter



# Achieving Harmony with Color

## Color Harmony

- Pleasing to the eye.
- Creates a sense of order and balance to visual experience.
- When not in harmony the experience can be boring or chaotic.



# Achieving Harmony with Color

## Color Schemes

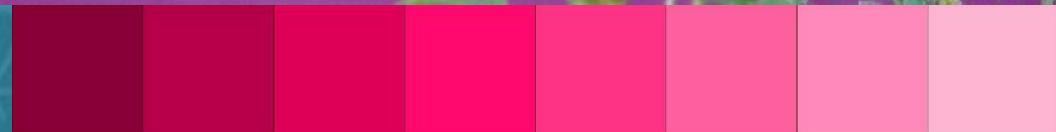
- **Monochromatic**
- **Analogous**
- **Complementary**
- **Triad**
- **Split Complementary**
- **Tetradic**
- **Achromatic**
- **Neutral**



# Color Schemes

## Monochromatic scheme

Uses only one color created from a tint, tone, or shade (adding white, gray, or black to original color)



# Color Schemes

## Monochromatic scheme

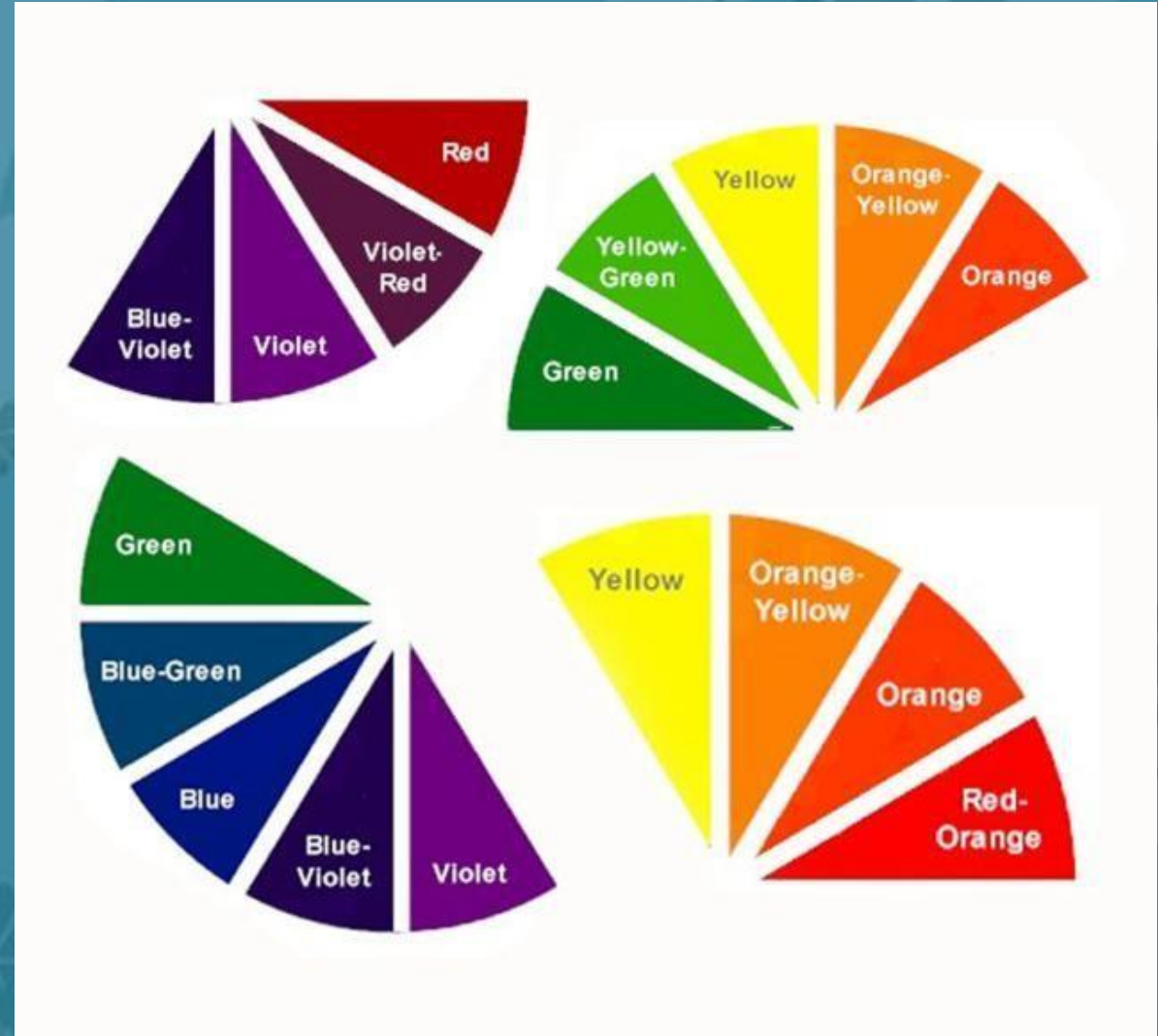
- Easiest to pull off
- Gives the feeling of serenity, calm and elegance
- Eyes linger longer on plants
- Form and texture are important to create interest
- Visually harmonious
- Less distracting
- Lowest degree of contrast (grabs less attention)



# Color Schemes

## Analogous scheme

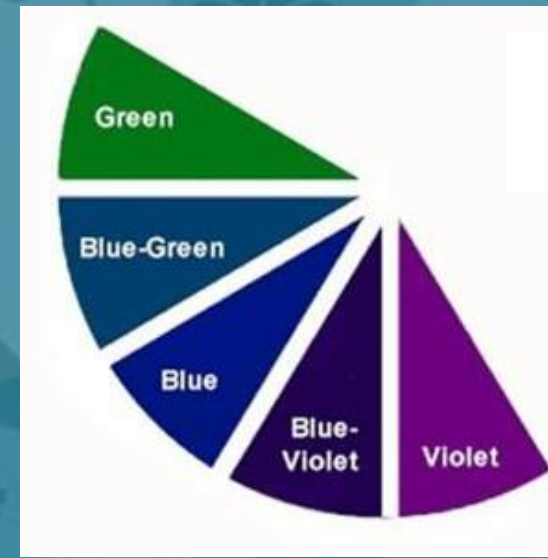
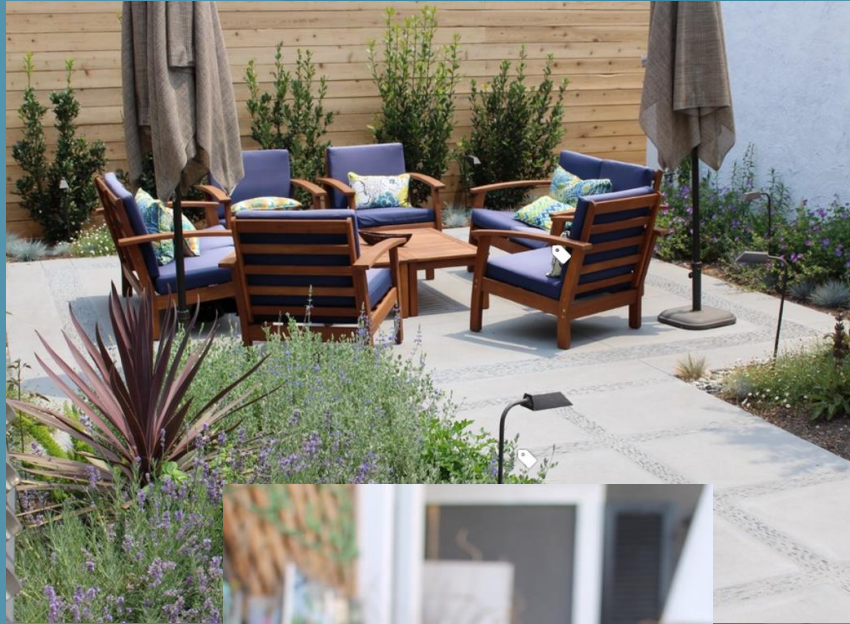
Typically uses three to five colors that are adjacent to each other on color wheel.



# Color Schemes

## Analogous scheme

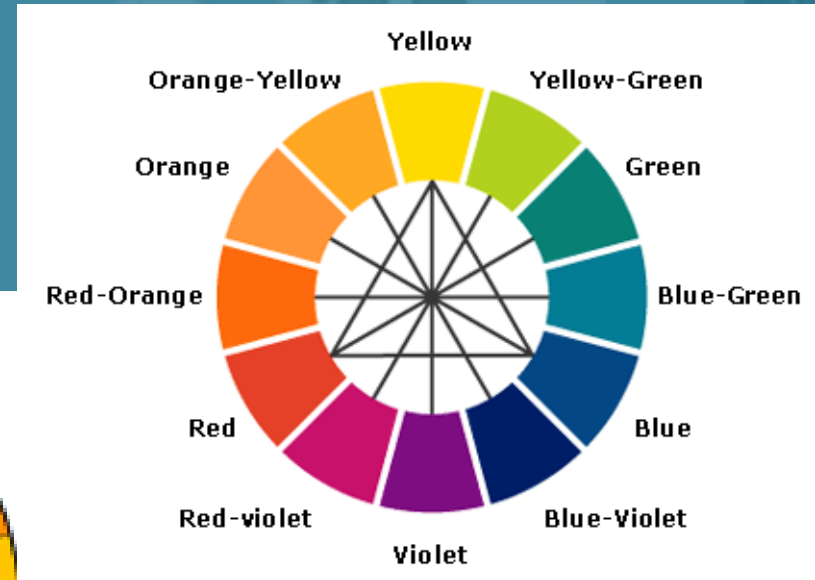
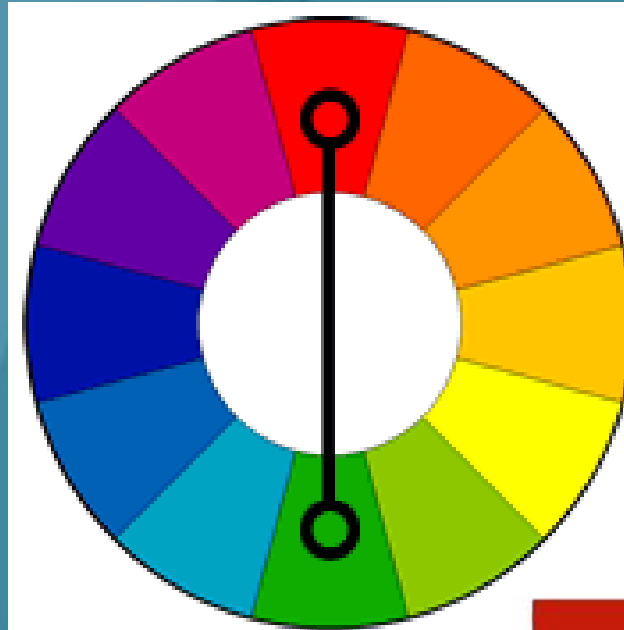
- Visually harmonious, serene designs
- Create a rich-looking design
- Often found in nature
- Can sometimes look drab
- Select one base color to dominate, a second to support, the third color to be used as an accent
- Avoid combining warm and cool colors in this scheme



# Color Schemes

## Complementary scheme

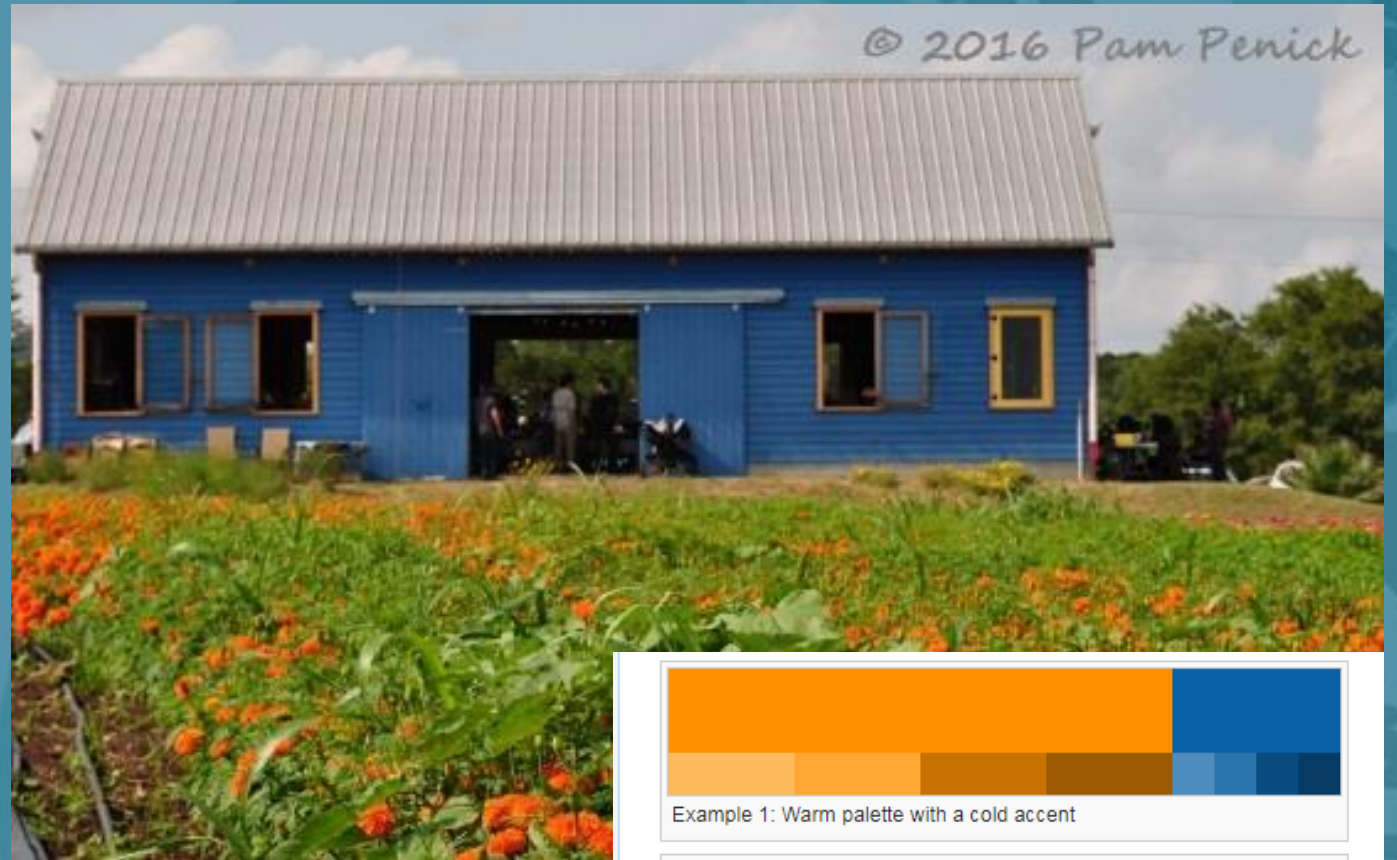
Colors that are opposite of each other on the color wheel. This scheme shows the greatest contrast.



# Color Schemes

## Complementary scheme

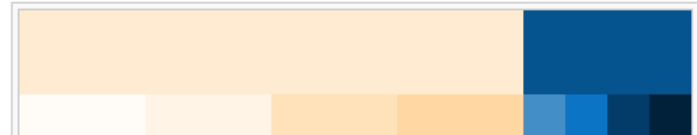
- Highest contrast (visually stimulating)
- Select a dominant color and use its complementary color for accents.
- Draws maximum attention
- Harder to balance compared to analogous or monochromatic schemes.



Example 1: Warm palette with a cold accent



Example 2: Cold palette with a warm accent

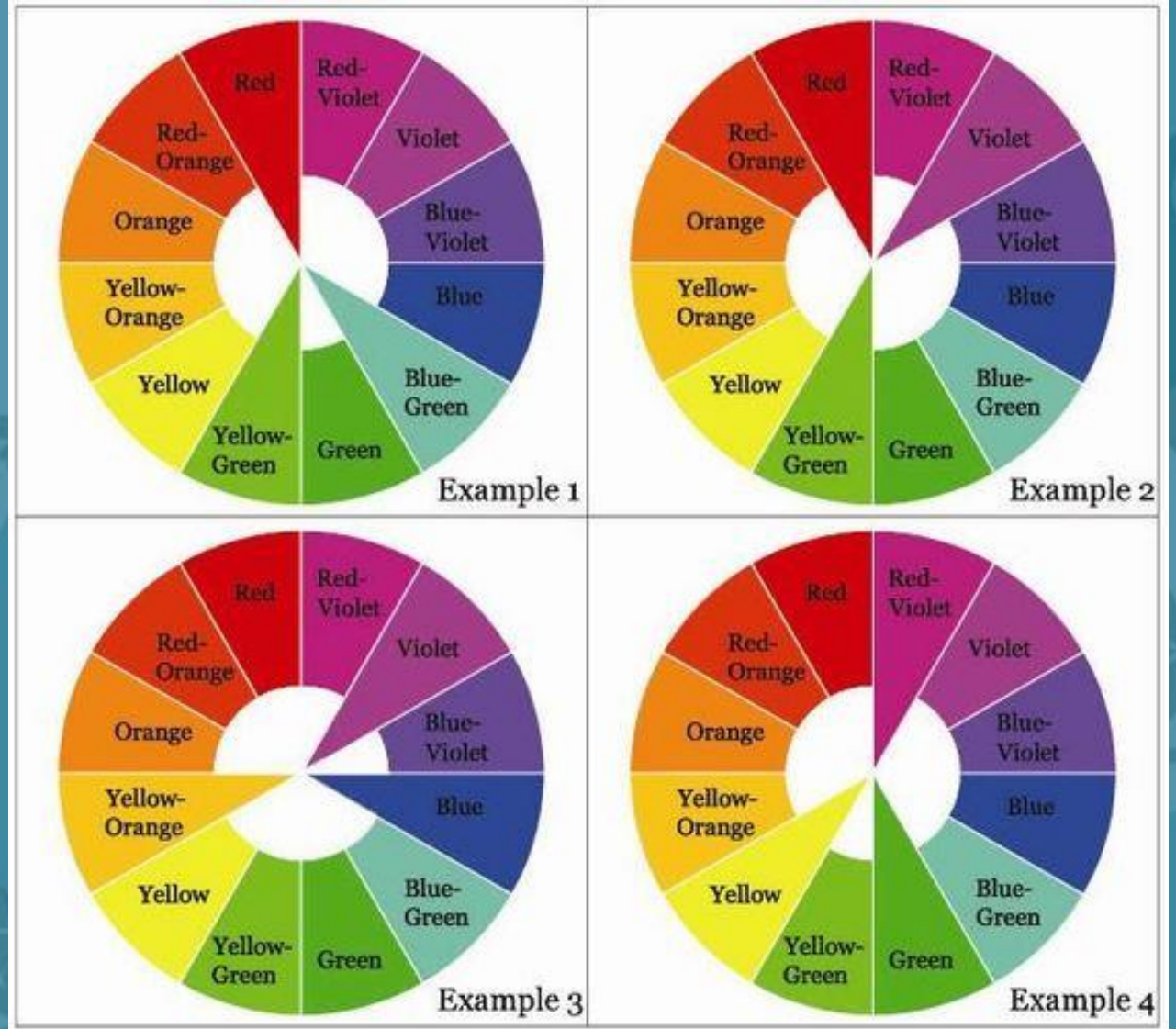


Example 3: Light, pale base color with a strong accent

# Color Schemes

## Split complementary scheme

This is a combination of two colors next to each other on color wheel and one complementary color.



# Color Schemes

## Split complementary scheme

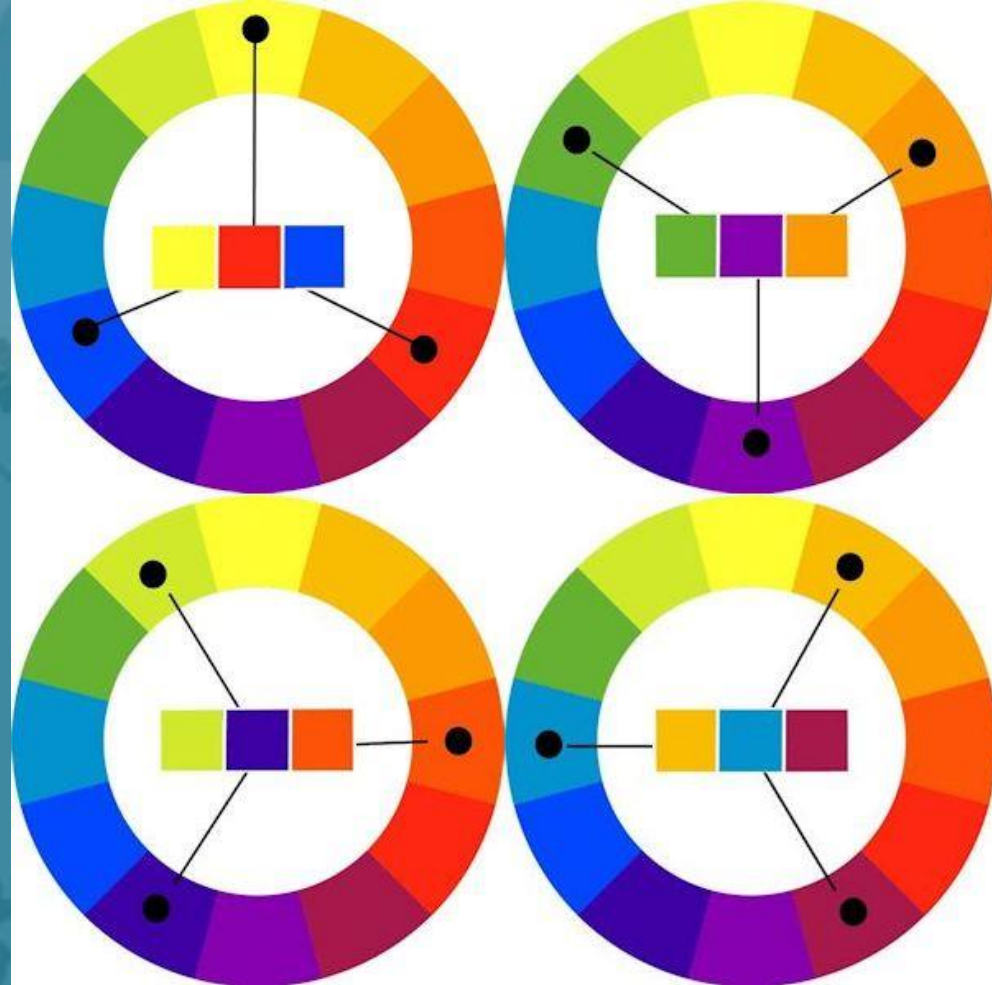
- Provides high contrast without strong tension compared to complementary scheme.
- Select one base color and two secondary colors for accents.
- Because there are two secondary colors the base color is never strong or dominant.
- Use a single warm color against a range of cool colors and vice versa.



# Color Schemes

## Triad scheme

Any three colors equally spaced from each other on color wheel. Combo draws intense interest.



# Color Schemes

## Triad scheme

- Strong contrast (visually stimulating)
- Retains balance and color richness
- Not as contrasting compared to complementary scheme
- Select dominant color and other colors use in less amounts



# Color Schemes

## Tetradic scheme

Uses four colors arranged into two complementary color pairs.



# Color Schemes

## Tetradic scheme

- Rich color scheme with lots of variation and vibrancy.
- Can be difficult to harmonize.
- Careful attention to balance between warm and cool colors.
- Select one color to dominate and use the other colors in a supporting or subdued way.
- Careful attention to the balance between warm and cool colors.



# Color Schemes

## Achromatic scheme

White, black and gray are achromatic when paired with one color (example green plants) make color “pop”.



# Color Schemes

## Achromatic scheme

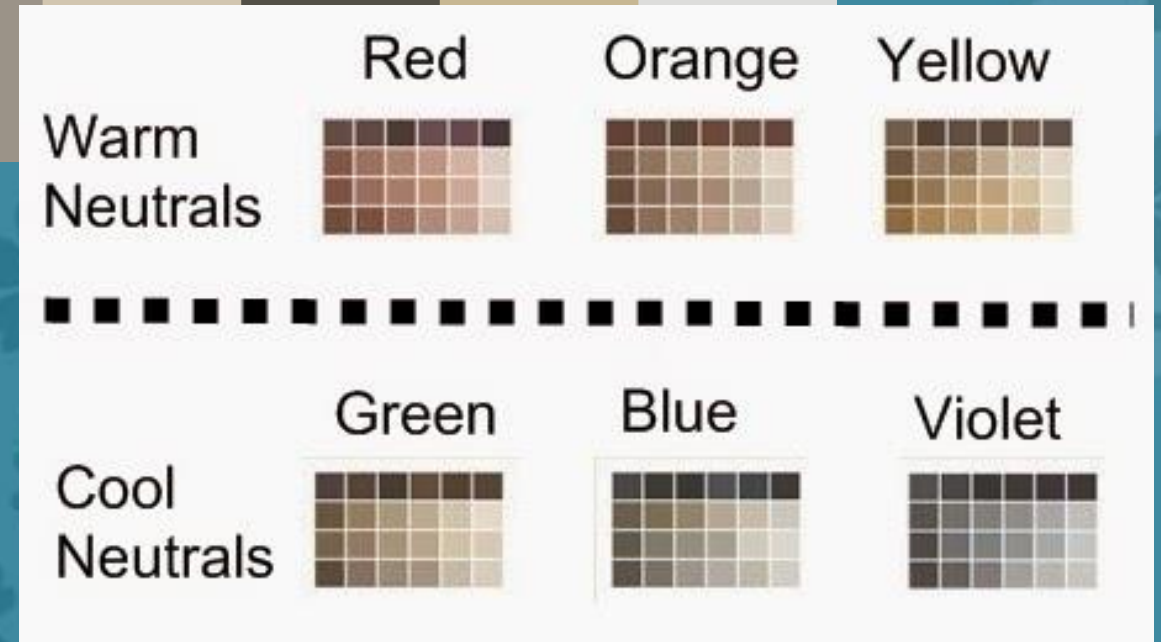
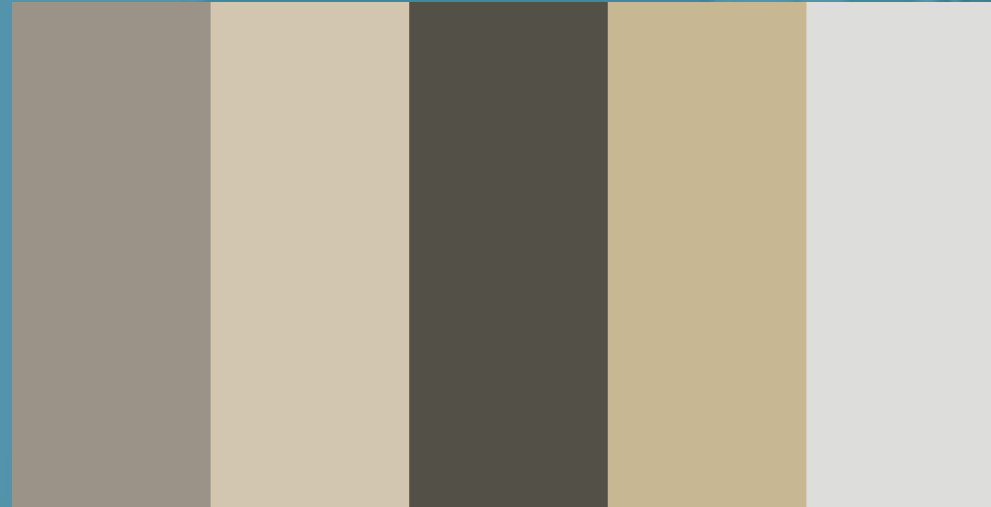
- High contrast
- Achromatic colors can be warm or cool.
- Can be used to create an elegant and sophisticated look.
- Use one accent color or harmonious color scheme to make colors “pop”.
- Can be paired with any color.
- Add texture and form to create interest.



# Color Schemes

## Neutral scheme

Neutral colors are created by mixing two complementary colors or mixing pure colors with white, black or gray. Browns, beiges, taupe are neutrals.



# Color Schemes

## Neutral scheme

- Creates warm, inviting look
- Neutral colors can be warm or cool.
- Can be used to create an elegant and sophisticated look.
- Use one accent color or harmonious color scheme to make colors “pop”.
- Can be paired with any color but pick only 2 to 3 other colors.
- Helps “tame” bright colors.



*Kalanchoe oravalis* and *Kalanchoe 'Fang'*



Desert Plants

# Analogous Scheme



Top left (clockwise): San Marcos Hibiscus, Hop bush and Whale's Tongue

# Complementary Scheme



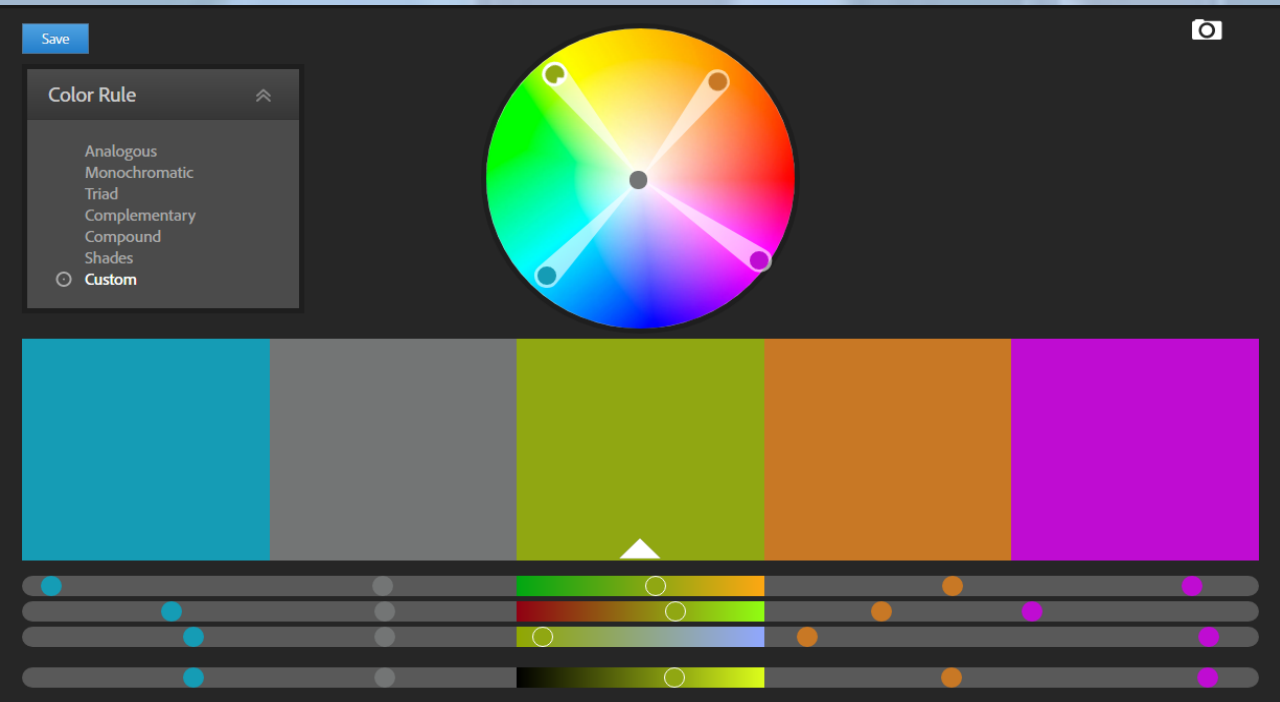
Top left (clockwise): Mexican Bird of Paradise,  
Black Spine Agave, Lantana and Artichoke Agave

# Triad Scheme



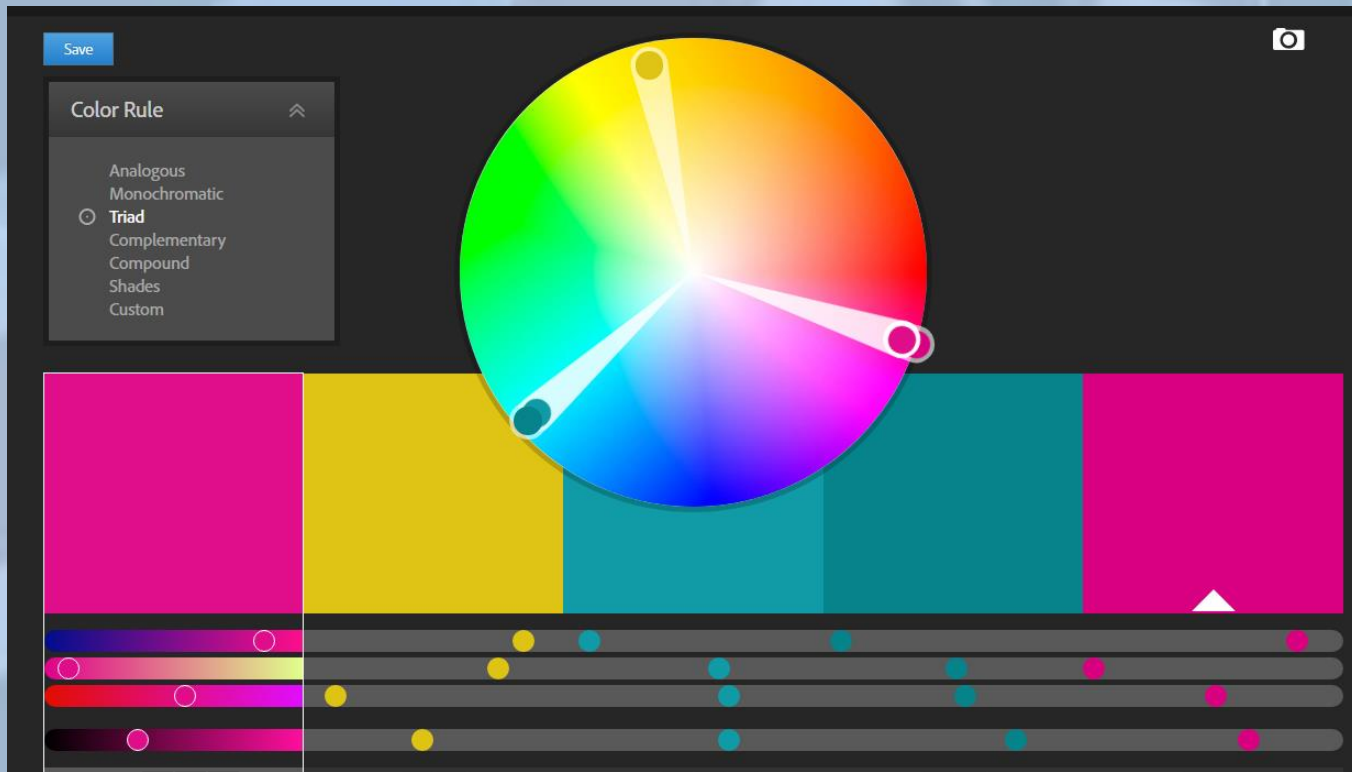
Top left (clockwise): Orange Jubilee Tacoma, Mealy-cup Sage and Queen Victoria Agave

# Inspiration: Creating Color Palettes



Top left (clockwise): Sweet Potato Vine, Superstition Mallow, Bougainvillea and Artichoke Agave

# Inspiration: Creating Color Palettes



Top left (clockwise): Bougainvillea, Yellow Bells and Globemallow



# Color in Your Garden

## References and Resources

Desert Landscape School: A Guide to Desert Landscaping and Maintenance-DBG

Color in Garden Design-Sandra Austin

Shade and Color with Water-Conserving Plants-James Walters & Balbir Backhaus

The Arizona Low Desert Flower Garden-Kirti Mathura

Contemporary Color in the Landscape-Andrew Wilson

Mountain States Wholesale Nursery-mswn.com

Mexicolor: The Spirit of Mexican Design-Tony Cohan

Color Explorer-<http://www.colorexplorer.com/colormatch.aspx>

Adobe Color CC-<http://color.adobe.com>

Pinterest