

How you need to prepare

You will need to organise your work space.

Make sure that you have enough room to work, and some wall space to put up studies and paintings as you go through the week. Allow space for your Floribunda set up, considering the light quality and backdrop that you prefer.

Will you be working at an easel, flat on a table, on the floor or straight onto the wall? Or perhaps a mixture of all of these, space permitting. Consider how you would like to use your space in a way that feels inspiring and allows room for plenty of experimentation. You could set up different work stations and get materials ready for each one to allow you to smoothly transition from each process to the next. Be organised. It will really help the flow of your work and keep your head clear too.

Set up your collection of plants and flowers.

Think of this as gathering resources rather than as a set arrangement that you will then try to copy. There could be pots of flowers from your garden. You may have beautiful vases (hierlooms, charity shop buys, a gift from a loved one) that you fill with gathered cut flowers from your garden. Even the weeds in my garden seem rather beautiful at the moment (Forget me nots and Dandelions seem to glow in a little drinking glass I have on my window sill). Maybe you go for a daily walk and come back with a handful of picked wild flowers to enjoy through the day. A mixture of all of these is fine. I would also say that you could find some patterned fabric, if you like, for them to sit on, or to be in your peripheral vision perhaps. Enjoy the process of arranging them. Have an abundance so that you can revel in the extraordinary variety and contrast of different plants side by side or jumbled together.

Gather and prepare your materials.

Paper

- You will need possibly 12 sheets of cartridge paper to do some drawn studies on. Size and weight of paper is not critical. What ever you can get your hands on. If you can work large, A1, then it would encourage a spacious, freer and more physical approach to your work but you can be equally expressive on a smaller scale too, but perhaps you will need double the number of sheets so you can work rapidly and physically.
- You will also need 12, A6 pieces of paper (postcard size).

You may wish to paint on paper:

- With acrylics make sure the paper is no less than 300gms in weight. To make finished paintings you will need at least 3 of the same size and shape, plus a few sheets for painted studies too.
- With oils the paper does not necessarily need to be sized or primed. Again the heavier and better quality paper is preferable. It is actually rather lovely working straight onto unsealed paper in oils. It stains and dries very quickly. The only thing you must be aware of is that with thick areas of paint, in time, there will be an oily halo appear around the paint, as the oil leaches into the surrounding bare paper. This is not something I dislike, but just so you know. You may prefer to prime your paper. A couple of thin coats of acrylic primer, gesso or household white emulsion would be good.
- My preferred paper is Arches Oil paper. This is pre-sized and a beautiful surface to work on.

If you prefer to paint on Canvas or Board

Canvas

Stretched canvas on a frame, or loose primed canvas off a roll (this could be wrapped around a board to give a firm surface to work on or stapled to the wall). Again 3 of the same shape and size required, as you will be working series.

Boards to paint on

Prepared artists boards are fine.

Pieces of MDF from your shed or garage. Priming might be a good idea but some artists rather like the unprimed surface too.

Smooth cardboard or mountboard are options too.

(3 of the same shape and size required, as you will be working series).

Paints and other materials

A guide to what colours to use in both acrylics and oils

The following list of colours enable you mix a fantastic range of colours. (No need to buy earth colours or greens).

Titanium White, Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Yellow, Indian Yellow, Cadmium Red or Vermillion, Alizarin Crimson, Magenta, Cobalt Blue, Cerulean Blue, Ultramarine Blue, Indigo, Cobalt Violet.

I also frequently use Oil Sticks as well as the paint.

Mediums and equipment for oils and acrylics

Oils - In my own studio I never use White spirit or Turpentine. It is highly toxic and smelly. I recommend Shellsol T which you can buy from Jacksons Art supplies of A P Fitzpatrick (this is a solvent which is an alternative to white spirit to clean your brushes with and thin the oil paint). I recommend that you use a 'Drying medium' (to speed up the drying time). I use a 50/50 mix of Linseed stand oil and Shellsol T. I find this mix odourless and very effective. If you cannot get hold of either of these open all your doors and windows to get lots of ventilation and use the mediums you already have.

Lots of Rags - I use rags to paint with a lot. So a good supply of cotton rags are essential.

Acrylics

Ideally acrylics should be diluted with acrylic mediums NOT water. So please have some acrylic mediums that say they will increase the flow and transparency of the paint. Some offer the option of increasing the gloss as well. That is up to you. I quite like glossy but some artists prefer matt.

Brushes for Oils and Acrylics

It is important to have lots of brushes in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Avoid having too many flat brushes instead buy Filberts, Rounds, Liners/Riggers. For bigger brushes I frequently go to hardware and decorating shops. Good makes are Princeton and Omega for large brushes. You will definitely need a couple of rigger brushes. These are traditionally used for water colour and have very long fine bristles, fantastic for delicate continuous lines. I recommend a few palette knives too, of differing shapes and sizes. Again use what you can get hold of in this situation.

Other materials

You will be making drawings as well as painting so it would be helpful to have;

Charcoal, an eraser, soft pencils, felt tip pens, oil sticks (if you have them).

By all means use mixed media too particularly with acrylic paints; inks, oil sticks, chalk and oil pastels, felt tip pens etc.

Masking tape, a glue stick and scissors will also be useful.

Day one:

Time	Activity
	We will start with mark making and getting up close to the subject through drawing. Moving in close and meandering through the flowers will inform the language of marks you will create. There will be drawing exercises to explore how to tackle the abundance of flowers and plants. You will need perhaps 10 sheets of paper for the day. The bigger the better. <i>Drawing in your own time and studio for the rest of the day.</i>

Day two:

Time	Activity
	There will be a mark making in paint demonstration to explore colour, texture, movement, luminosity and the physicality of the subject. Also examples of two ways to start a painting to set you up for the day ahead. You will need two prepared supports or surfaces that will be continued as your paintings. <i>Painting in your own time and studio for the rest of the day.</i>

Day three:

Time	Activity
	Today will start with ways of looking at the two paintings that you began yesterday. What is good, how to move forward. How to make studies of your paintings to help you make changes to the work as required. You will be working on paper for the studies and then back into the previous days work. <i>Painting in your own time and studio for the rest of the day.</i>

Day four:

Time	Activity
	There will be exercises to help you look at the your ongoing paintings. This last session is about giving you resources to continue you paintings on your own in your studio. Giving you more confidence with your own judgment. You will need 9 very small (A7) pieces of paper and also 4- 5 piece of paper to both draw and paint on. <i>Painting in your own time and studio for the rest of the day.</i>

