

# ¡Viva Colores!

Add life to outdoor spaces with these Southwestern ideas for using color creatively



**A** garden is a special place: Some call it a refuge, some call it a retreat, but most of us simply know that when we're there, we're in an environment that creates a peaceful state of mind.

One of the great joys of living in the Southwest is being surrounded by bold colors. They're all around—in our azure skies, vermillion sandstone cliffs, golden autumn leaves, and bright wildflowers. Thanks to the Hispanic and Native American cultures, we also have a legacy of using bright colors in creative combinations inside and out.

Take your cue from these garden ideas found in New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Texas. Put up a pink wall, and a red geranium becomes an *objet d'art*. Sponge a bit of purple on stucco, and yuccas planted nearby are transformed into dancers in a prickly ballet. A chrome-yellow chair isn't just a chair anymore—it's a sassy companion to some spring daffodils and a blue Chinese vase. A mosaic or a mural makes the mundane musical.

Like all performers, flowers need a stage. In the garden, a splash of bright color spices up the space, amps up the drama, and makes what's already there more fabulous.—*Charles Mann*



## Pretty Pinks

1. Nancy Dickensen's Santa Fe garden creatively combines a rosy wall, modern light fixtures, and rustic wooden doors. 2. Scarlet Fever: Santa Fe designer Deena Perry amps up the energy in this garden by placing confetti-colored birdcages and red geraniums against a crimson wall. 3. A stucco wall painted bubblegum pink draws attention to simple clay urns and a New Mexico piñon tree. 4. A Prussian-blue gate lures the eye to a drift of Mexican primroses.



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## Bright Blues

1. By painting a charming border around the window of this hideaway on Acequia Madre in Santa Fe, artist Ford Ruthling transforms the ordinary into art. 2. In a Denver backyard, a royal-blue garage wall is an alluring backdrop that allows these simple hollyhocks to take center stage. 3. At the entrance to this Santa Fe garden, distressed paint and a clutch of clay urns evoke an air of mystery. 4. A splashy pot, a yellow chair, and a bunch of daffodils are a jazzy trio. 5. Marrakesh Express: Inspired by Majorelle Garden, a botanical garden in Marrakesh, Morocco, this outdoor space in San Antonio, Texas, juxtaposes uniform yellow pots against a wall of rich blue.



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### Rustic Reds

1. Outlined in Red: This home in Phoenix's Willo District became the talk of the town when garden designer Carrie Nimmer and her architect husband, Peter, built this low *banco* wall and painted it bright red. 2. Cover a basic flowerpot with a mosaic of red tiles and, suddenly, a cactus becomes a sassy sculpture. 3. A fiery-red wall in the Phoenix garden of Sally Shoemaker makes the fountain in front of it seem all the more cool and serene. 4. A Santa Fe public art project, *Trail of the Painted Ponies*, led to this ruby-red entry poised in the garden of Carole La Roche Gallery, on Canyon Road. 5. Carrie Nimmer shifted this Phoenix garden of desert wildflowers into overdrive by giving this rustic furniture new red cushions to complement a drift of yellow California poppies.



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### Perfect Purples

1. An eastside Santa Fe adobe becomes a streetside showpiece when this purple morning glory climbs from a blue window box.
2. A wall dappled with cool indigo, a minimalist footlight, an urn, and a spiral handrail create a feeling of spare serenity in Nancy Dickensen's garden on Tano Road, in Santa Fe.
3. In late spring, a simple red gate becomes the star of a romantic, dreamy scene when this wisteria cascades over an adobe wall on Santa Fe's East De Vargas Street.
4. All his life, artist Ford Ruthling has been using bold colors to make elegant and exciting scenes, like this entry to his Santa Fe garden.
5. Landscape architect and expert plantsman David Cristiani used a lilac-colored wall and gold-flowering shrubs to create a vibrant outdoor space for this Albuquerque home.

**Charles Mann** is a Santa Fe writer, horticulture enthusiast, and photographer who travels the world photographing exemplary gardens for books and magazines. See more of his work at [www.charlesmannphotography.com](http://www.charlesmannphotography.com).