

QUILTING AND COLOUR (by Betty Ann McNabb)

Choosing fabric can be scary. You are spending money and want to make sure the quilt will look wonderful. Not only are you choosing colours, but prints that go with other prints. Should it be a large print, should the print be small, and will this colour go with that colour? A well-known quilting instructor – Judy Neimeyer - stated: “There is no right or wrong colour combination. Rules are made to be broken.” Here are some simple hints:

1. Find a focus fabric. Look around and find a fabric that catches your eye. You can build a quilt around that focus fabric by picking fabrics that compliment the colours. Sometimes, a magnifying glass may help you pick out some of the subtler colours.
2. Look at the contrast between the chosen fabrics: For example, a softened contrast would consist of medium colours and light colours whereas an intense contrast would consist of dark and light fabrics. Some quilts can have varied degrees of dark, medium and light contrast throughout the pattern. All three are usually in a quilt but most quilts have more dark and light colours than medium.

Warm colours have a tendency to stand out more in a quilt than cool colours.

If you have difficulty defining a colour in the focus fabric and are unsure whether the other fabric you have chosen really is a complementary colour, take a piece of paper and make a hole in it. Put it up to the colour you want to match and place the complementary fabric you have chosen next to the hole.

If you have not chosen a focus fabric, another way to look at colours is to go to your local paint store and pick out some colour samples. The samples show light to dark.

N.B. Yellow is almost always in the light colour category, just by its nature. Sometimes a dark gold can be seen as a medium hue.

The most dynamic colour combination is made up of 2 colours that are opposite on the colour wheel (e.g. blue and white, black and orange). Monochromatic colour schemes are similar in colour matches and offer a tranquil effect.

3. Look to nature. Take pictures of gardens, ponds, lakes, sky, and look at the colours in the picture. The colour of a quilt can be built on something you saw in nature. An example could be, shadows may be black, leaves may be several shades of greens or the sky may be several shades of blue with a dark background. **Don't be afraid of colour.** If I am in a shop and I see material that stands out to me, I usually pick up 3 meters of the fabric. I can then build my colours and find a pattern to use that fabric in.
4. There are colour wheels and books that are available to help you choose colours. Youtube is another resource for learning about colour and pallets.
5. Finally, if you are choosing colours from a photograph and have difficulty discerning colour contrasts, take a black and white photocopy of the photograph. You will then see all the darks, medium and lights hues.