



Left: a selection of
threads with which to
capture spring blues.
All from top down.

Spring BLUES

*...or are they purples?
Building a
colour palette
for embroidery.*

Bluebell, periwinkle, scilla, hyacinth, muscari, iris reticulata: are they blue or purple, or several shades of both all at once. Massed together in sunlit woods, bluebells are an ethereal drift of grey-blue in the distance. Best of all is the mysterious haze hovering above them just before they open. Yet the early native English bluebell far right was freshly picked (from a friend's garden!) and it appears the deepest shade of purple, with lapis, and lilac and lavender. The only way to find the right thread is to put the flower against it, and discover that, like the muscari Valerie Finnis on Card no 4 (page 6), the petals move through four distinct colours, each revealing shades within shades.



While nothing is better than looking closely at the real plant, hand-painted botanical watercolours are a wonderful source for embroidery because the artist has already distilled the essence of the plant, and the layering of shades in watercolour are instructive for silk shading. ❖

*"The frail bluebell
peereth over
Rare broidry of
the purple clover"*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson



Left: Experiment with
paints by mixing
ultramarine with
permanent rose
Far Left: Icehouse
Wood, Oxted 1894
'In Spring Attire'
Euphemia Hussey



RIGHT & BELOW: ©CAROLINE ZOGB

