

A few dried hydrangea petals yield just about every shade of purple and provide a useful colour reference for threads when planning embroidery designs.



The many shades of **PURPLE**

Caroline Zoob explores this colour of many shades, from the deepest violet to palest lilac.

From Horace's 'flashy purple patches' and the perfumed purple sails of Cleopatra's barge, to ladies in lavender, women with 'a history', droopy Victorian widows in dreary heliotrope and old ladies out to shock, the colour purple has been going in and out of fashion for centuries. No-one quite knows what the purple of ancient Rome looked like, but it was achieved with a dye called Tyrian, created by mingling fluids from two kinds of shellfish and fermenting them in stale urine for ten days before adding the cloth. Fortunately, creating purplish shades became a little more scientific in the mid-nineteenth century when a trainee chemist, in trying to extract quinine from coal tar, produced a bright purple

liquid. Thwarted artistic leanings made him sufficiently curious to dip his silk hanky into the liquid whereupon he realised he had accidentally created a colour-fast dye, which he called mauve. When Isaac Newton first began his optical experiments seeing the sun's white light scattered by his prism, purple was the name he used for the colour he saw at one end of the spectrum. Later he called that colour 'violet.' The Impressionist painters believed that shadows were never grey or black, and since violet was the complementary colour of yellow sunlight, shade must be violet. Look at paintings such as Monet's *Morning on the Seine near Giverny* and you will see every shade of purple, and violet in particular. ➤➔





I enjoy using paint to map out my thread colours. I might leave some paint showing, but mostly not. The violet in progress is worked in single strand *Soie de Paris* in Dark Lavender (no. 3335) and Lavender (no 3333). Below those are Sweet Pea by Weeks Dye Works and Gentle Art's *Hyacinth*.



The wedding violet

Clockwise from top left: A tiny fresh violet and vintage embroidery pattern. Why not order some silk and have a go? Reminiscent of Mimi in her Bohemian attic, fashioning finti fiori to decorate hats and gowns. Devon violets picked and pressed and sent to Caroline, their scent lingering on the tissue. ➤➤





Pansies



Viola

[444]

V I O L A palustris.
Marsh Violet.

PENTANDRIA Monogyna.

GEN. CHAR. Cal. 5-leaved. Petals 5, irregular, the lowermost spurred behind. Capsule superior, of one cell, with 3 valves.

SPEC. CHAR. Stem none. Leaves kidney-shaped.

SYN. Viola palustris. Linn. Sp. Pl. 1324. Hoff. 770. With. 261. Lightf. 506. Curt. 1.

V. palustris rotundifolia glabra.

ON the moist parts of sandy... in Scotland, and the north of... it is found plentifully (according to... and our specimen was gathered in... Turner. This violet is not... than or Sibehorp, though...
Root perennial, creeping...
Stem none. Leaves...
spreading, kidney-shaped...
smooth, of a delicate...
radical, ovate, acute, fr...
Flower-stalks longer than...
with a pair of lanceolate...
always below the middle...
Flowers appearing in May...
and first... than in the me...
rather... slightly men...
petals... dark...
base; the...
branched fr...
bearing...
col...
collected to...
species of Viola, so that...
original form or not...
might no longer be... in the class...
Such... with a foliolar...
precisely with the Linnean...
The Viola rubra frista Ehrhacmhi Raii Syn. 365...
should seem by coloured copies of the Flora Danica to be t. 83...
of that work; and the leaves are there represented less pointed...
or more truly kidney-shaped, than ours, but we have no doubt...
of its being merely a variety.



I collect antique botanical drawings and illustrations. The paper-cut Pansy above and left was made by someone believed to have learned from Mrs Delaney (see Issue no. 5). So



helpful for embroidery, as is the little drawing showing you how to use long-and-short stitch to 'paint' the pansy with your needle. The violets (left) are embroidered in flat silk. ❖



Vintage silk threads



Soie Perlée (AVaS) no 190