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ON THE ROAD WITH AHS

I REALLY LOVE color in the garden. And clearly I am not alone in this because there is a significant trend in American gardening to use bright colors. Flowers, foliage, sculpture—all offer endless creative expression with color. These past few months I have been inspired by the artistry of the bold and dramatic color effects I have seen in gardens across the country.

My color tour started with Fashion in Bloom, where the leaders in the horticultural industry put on a series of amazing displays this past September at six sites in the mid-Atlantic, including the AHS's headquarters at River Farm. The gardens were spectacular for a second year in a row, with impressive displays of flowering bedding plants, perennials, shrubs, and trees from the five participants (for more on Fashion in Bloom, see page 12).

Following Fashion in Bloom, on my way to the America in Bloom Awards Symposium in Eureka Springs, Arkansas (see page 15), I stopped to visit AHS members Bob and Marilyn Bogle in Bentonville, Arkansas. As great believers in flower color, they have made a major contribution to their community by creating parks filled with petunias, roses, and impatiens. This joyful exuberance is there for all to enjoy.

Thanks to AHS Board member Allan Armitage of the University of Georgia and our good friends at the Ball Horticultural Company, I was able to participate in the Perennial Plant Production Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. During a break in the program, Allan and I toured a couple of private gardens. I have never seen such enthusiasm for bold foliage color; one garden included nearly 20 varieties of coleus.

Then, on a trip to the Pacific Northwest, I stayed with author and plantsman Dan Hinkley, who received the AHS 2006 Liberty Hyde Bailey award. Dan and his partner, Robert Jones, took me to the garden of artists George Little and David Lewis in Bainbridge Island, Washington. Using colored concrete—in hues of cobalt blue, turquoise, and purple—as their sculptural medium and tropical plants as habitat, these two artistic geniuses have created a garden with the feel of an archaeological discovery in a Mexican jungle.

I would be remiss if I didn't share with you one of the most spectacular displays of color I have experienced in a garden—the Niki de Saint Phalle exhibit at the Atlanta Botanic Garden. The garden's executive director, Mary Pat Matheson, spearheaded the project to bring together the world's largest exhibition of the late artist's outdoor sculptures. Many of the pieces are large enough to walk inside—see me in the photo above—and every piece is brilliant with color and sparkle. Be on the lookout if this collection comes to a public garden near you.

As I write this column, I am back at my childhood home in Garrison, New York, where the brilliant fall color of the sugar maple leaves in the Hudson Valley rivals all that I saw on my travels. Now, sated with color, I can anticipate with pleasure the muted hues of winter.

May you all be surrounded by much joy and love during this holiday season.



—Katy Moss Warner, AHS President Emeritus

