

Summer Garden

Mixed Media Painting

Beth Sothenden



*Ink and watercolor with lots of
doodling* 

This is a fun little project for all you doodlers out there! This time of year, even during a normal year, I start to get cabin fever, and can't wait to start growing things. The garden catalogs are coming to the house daily, with all their wonderful, juicy colors, and I begin to imagine the world outside my windows bursting with life again.

Doodling is something I do absent mindedly, usually while talking on the phone and making notes (yikes, did I really turn that phone number into a flower?). In this project, we're going to doodle deliberately, with focus and patience, to grow a garden from blobs of juicy color. And that's all there is to it!

Materials:

- A set of watercolors, any brand (you can even borrow from your kids)
- Large brush that holds lots of water and paint
- 1 sheet of watercolor paper, or other heavy, absorbant paper. I used 9" x 12" size paper. 8" x 10" or 11" x 14" are also good.
- Waterproof black pen. I used fine and ultra fine Sharpies. Test your pen to be sure it's waterproof.

Step 1

Load your brush with clean water and pick a color. For this painting, I started with warm colors; orange, red and yellow. Make a large loose circle anywhere on the page but the center. Add more paint, let it puddle and fill in the shape. Let this dry. Add a few more loose circles.



I suggest taping your paper down to a slightly larger surface. I didn't tape mine down, because I like to turn it constantly while I work. You'll notice it begins to buckle in later steps. I can always flatten it out under a stack of art books when it's done, but it does affect the flow of paint.

Step 2

Add some more blobs of color. Begin to introduce some cool color if you're using mostly warm colors, or vice versa. Make various sized blobs, let them touch and mingle a little. Drop some darker color into the centers of your larger shapes. Begin adding some loose green shapes that will become leaves later.

Notice that this is all very loosey goosey; the less perfect, the better!

Step 3



More blobs! Swirl color around in the circles to simulate layers of petals. Give yourself lots of variety. This is still a predominately warm painting, but I've added some more cool blue for contrast. Drop in a few small shapes here and there.

This is beginning to look quite busy, but I notice there is still a lot of plain white space. Before you begin doodling, fill in some of that with light washes of colors used in your painting. You want some quiet space, but the extra color will help pull the painting together.

Yes, the paper is buckling! This is affecting the direction the wet paint runs in. Next time, I'll find a small board to tape down my paper.

Step 4

Time to doodle!

- Using the waterproof pen, draw lines, dots, spirals and petal shapes, turning your blobs into beautiful flowers. It helps to turn the paper as you work on petals and circular shapes. Use the example for ideas, but feel free to experiment! This is where that "zen" focus and patience come in. Let go of stress and just enjoy the process. It's not about perfection.

- Notice I've filled in some of the white background from the previous step. Some of that gets incorporated into the flower shapes, especially the large loose flower in the center right, which picked up a few of the small scattered shapes in that area. I added a little wash of orange to the center of that flower after drawing the lines.

- Take advantage of overlapping shapes to put one flower in front of, or behind another.

- Where you have a couple of busy designs, like the two blue and the bottom orange flower, make a simpler, more open design on some nearby flowers. This is also the case with the top left red flower between the busy blue and yellow flowers.



And there you have a beautiful summer garden! Hang it where it can bring you cheer while you wait for spring and summer to arrive.