

Wayside Verge

Landscapes are not just about panoramas – verges, edges and other liminal areas offer endless inspiration. A cropped or close-up view is another approach. Here, the portrait format emphasizes the structural, vertical plants such as the lavatera and umbellifer seed heads.

When painting, don't be enslaved by the underdrawing. Develop the marks you make into shapes – a touch of the side of the brush might suggest a leaf, or a seed head, so develop it into one by refining the shape with the tip of the brush or extending a stem from it.

Look for patterns of both colour and tone. The patterns should lead your eye around the painting, not keeping it in one place. The red flowers are the focal points.



Preliminary sketch

It's a good idea to do a preliminary sketch before starting to paint in order both to work out the colours needed and to loosen up with some washes and mark making.



1 Prepare your watercolour paper by stretching it, as described on page 62, then set your board up at roughly forty-five degrees. Use a 2B pencil to make the initial sketch.

You will need

Paints: aureolin yellow, tropical phthalo blue, permanent rose, quinacridone magenta

Acrylic ink: burnt sienna

Brushes: size 12 round

Surface: 35 x 50cm (13¾ x 19¾in) watercolour paper 300gsm (140lb)

Other materials: 2B pencil and eraser, gummed tape, sponge, toothbrush, ruling pen, masking fluid, palette knife, colour shaper, water sprayer, cocktail stick

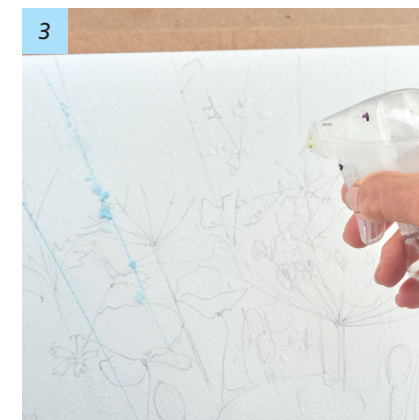
Tip

For the tropical phthalo blue and permanent rose watercolour I recommend those produced by the SAA, as these are particularly strong and vibrant colours.

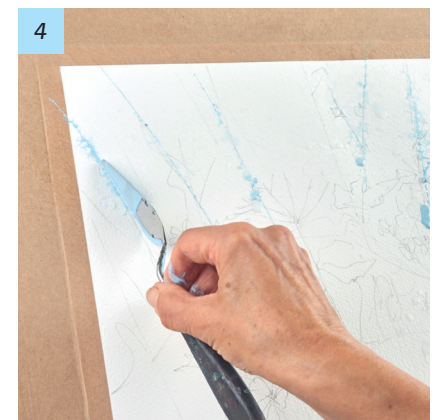


2 Pick up some masking fluid on your palette knife and apply it to the surface using the edge of the knife in long, near-vertical strokes at the top of the painting.

3 While it remains wet, spray the lines with your water spray.



4 Continue adding gestural lines of masking fluid with the edge of the knife around the middle and bottom of the painting. Don't worry if you spill a few drops of masking fluid on the surface – these can simply be rubbed away once dry.



5 Use the colour shaper to mask the lavatera flowers.



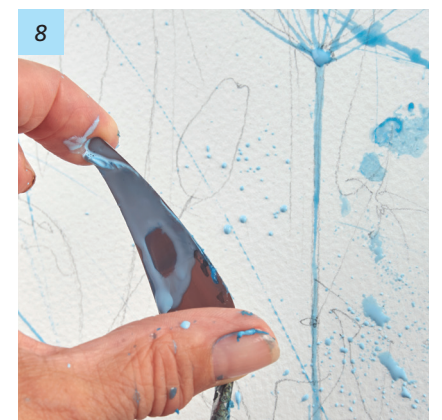
6 For more controlled, fine lines (such as on the fine umbellifer stems and seed heads), change to the ruling pen.



7 Use the toothbrush to lightly spatter the surface with masking fluid.



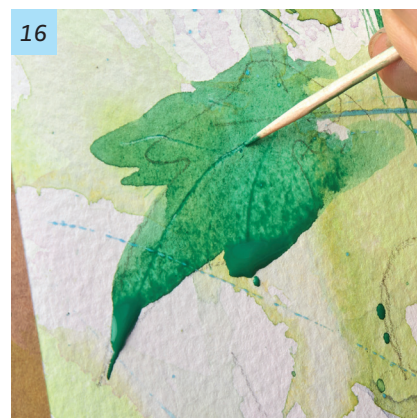
8 Add heavier spatters with the painting knife.



9 While the masking fluid dries, prepare wells of the following colours: a mauve mix of quinacridone magenta and tropical phthalo blue; a yellow-green mix of aureolin yellow and tropical phthalo blue; and a blue-green of the same colours, but with more tropical phthalo blue.

10 Lightly spray the top part of the painting, then pick up the mauve mix on the painting knife and draw it down through the area a few times to add loose, out-of-focus lavatera.





11 Use the side of the size 12 round brush to wet the top central area, then add some of the mauve mix into the wet area. Create a 'start' by painting the surface with open gestural marks, using the mauve mix very diluted down. Leave lots of gaps in this underpainting, and make sure to create a little visual imbalance by using slightly less diluted paint on the right-hand side.

12 Use the water spray to push the wet paint into interesting shapes, then allow to dry.

13 Turn the board upside-down, then load the size 12 round brush with the blue-green mix. Using a flicking motion while holding the brush at arm's length, add some long directional spattering marks. Open up and soften the marks a little with the spray bottle. Try to avoid the poppies.

14 Turn the board around again. Build up some stem and foliage shapes across the top left-hand side of the painting by applying clean water with different parts of the size 12 round brush – the tip, side and whole body of the brush – plus the spray bottle. Work into the wet areas with the yellow-green mix (aureolin yellow and tropical phthalo blue), touching the paint into the water with the brush. Avoid the poppies, but be sure to cover the umbellifers. Use a variety of brush strokes to make different marks; don't be afraid to spatter the paint on either.

15 Allow the painting to dry – use a hairdryer to speed this up, if necessary; it's important that each area is completely dry before moving on. Add some stems with the edge of the palette knife and the blue-green mix, then build up the suggestion of leaves, stems and buds using the blue-green mix and a similar variety of mark-making brush strokes as for the yellow-green.

16 Use a clean cocktail stick to suggest veining on the leaves by gently creating indentations for the paint to run into.

17 Vary the tone of the blue-green mix by adding more tropical phthalo blue as you work – this helps prevent the area becoming monotone and flat. Similarly, Use the spray bottle to open up the wet paint in some larger leaves.

18 Prepare a well of tropical phthalo blue and add a few drops of burnt sienna acrylic ink to make a dark mix.

19 Start to add some warm areas using burnt sienna acrylic ink. Apply it with the edge of the palette knife – or the tip of the dropper – for long stems, and with the clean wet size 12 round brush for larger areas. Use the spray and flick technique with the spray bottle and palette knife for further textural variety.

20 Swapping between the blue-green and dark mixes, build up the impression of dense foliage and texture using the dark mix. Use the washing out technique – paint a large leaf, allow to dry a little, then spray it with the water spray and dab it with kitchen paper. Some of the outline will remain while most of the inner part is lifted out, giving a subtle appearance.

21 Make a strong purple mix of quinacridone magenta with a little tropical phthalo blue, and build up the dark textures on the lower right-hand side.

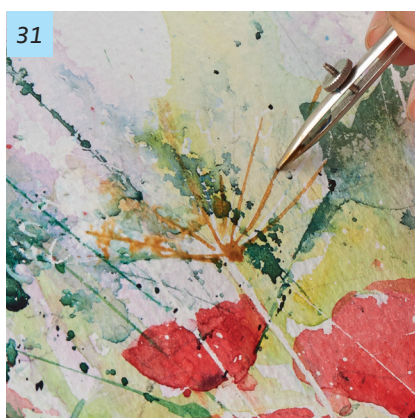
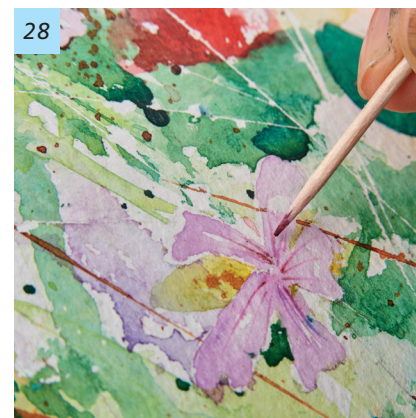
22 Prepare a well of permanent rose, then use the size 12 round brush to paint the main poppies. Use the side of the brush to create the shape of the poppies as simply as possible – don't try to paint individual petals. Using the dry-in-wet technique, draw folds into the poppy petals with the tip of the brush and a strong, creamy mix of permanent rose.

23 Make a deep purple mix of permanent rose and tropical phthalo blue. Touch this in at the visible centres of the poppies. In order to tie this colour into the rest of the painting, and avoid the poppies standing out too much, we need to add some additional permanent rose elsewhere in the image. Use spattering and the spray and flick techniques to add a few little hints.

24 Mix some of the burnt sienna acrylic ink into the permanent rose. Use this rusty mix to warm and enrich the lower central part of the painting with the tip of the brush. Allow the painting to dry completely, then use your ball of dried masking fluid to remove all of the masking fluid from the painting.

25 Prepare more of the mauve mix (quinacridone magenta and tropical phthalo blue) and make a stronger mix from the same colours for the stigma. Starting from the top of the painting, start to paint the lavender flowers. Leaving small highlights of clean paper, use the tip of the brush to paint two or three petals at a time wet in wet.





26 Touch in the mauve mix at the tip and centre of each petal, so that a highlight is left in the centre, then draw a dry cocktail stick through to indicate veins.

27 Paint the remaining petals in the same way, then use the strong mix to add the central stigmas, applying the paint with the tip of a cocktail stick.

28 Paint the other lavender flowers in the same way. Add variety by painting the veins with the strong stigma mix and the cocktail stick instead of simply using the tip to press into the paper.

29 Add stems using a deep-green mix of tropical phthalo blue with a little aureolin yellow and a little permanent rose. Lightly mist the area with the water spray, then use the point of the size 12 round brush to pull out the shapes of the buds and the small leaves.

30 Develop the stems with the spray and flick technique and the brush; plus the spattering technique with the palette knife.

31 Add burnt sienna ink to aureolin yellow paint to make a brown mix. Adjust the ruling pen to a fine width, then load it with the paint. Use this to draw in very fine lines and paint the umbellifer.

32 Combine some of the mauve and brown mixes and use this with the size 12 round brush to paint the seed heads.

33 Add the poppy stems with the tip of the size 12 round and the deep-green mix. Aim for a wavering shape and a fairly even width to the line. Add occasional small leaves if there is space. To finish, use the darker mixes on our palette to add some touches around the painting to balance it.



The finished painting.