

Botanical Art for Beginners

Part 4 Vegetables: Red Onion



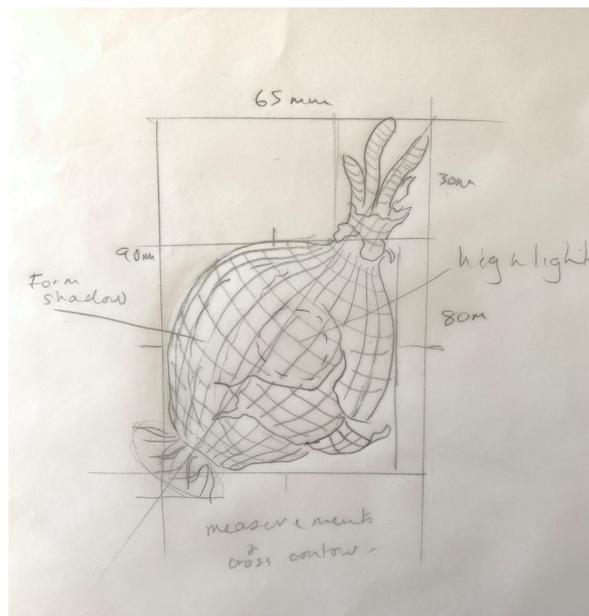
A Red Onion is the subject of this tutorial, which accompanies the two part video on the website. This vegetable challenges with some different textures, from its papery broken skin to its green sprouting top and for the first time we encounter some small roots too.

Step 1 Draw

- As in the previous exercise, observe and gather as much information as possible before starting.
- Take measurements of the subject. Height, width and widest point of the fruit are the most important measurements.
- Mark out the basic measurements within a box shape.
- Make an outline drawing.
- When you are happy with the drawing, transfer it to the watercolour paper, using tracing paper and ca. Refer to the video for guidance
- If you have time, make a cross-contour drawing of the subject, so that you understand the form. Refer back to the apple tutorial for further information on cross contour drawing. See image below for measured drawing on tracing paper with contour lines included.

Lighting

As always make sure that the lighting is good on your subject, position a lamp at the upper left or right hand side of the subject. You should now be familiar with the practice of using a lamp positioned at one side of the subject to create light and shade.



Step 2. Colour Mixing

Step 1. Before starting work out the colours:

Make colour notes and work out *all* colour mixes, paint colour swatches and make notes for reference, as shown.

1. For the underlying colours: Cobalt Blue mixed with Cerulean Blue and Cobalt Blue mixed with Quinacridone Magenta to create the violet colour.

2. For the basic hues i.e. the reds/purples: I used three reds. The cool Quinacridone Magenta to a warm Scarlet Lake and darker warm Permanent Carmine. I mixed varying shades using these colours, as shown in the colour chart.

3. For the shade colour on the onion skin, I used Permanent Carmine and Indanthrene blue (using with a small amount of blue).

4. Green: Cobalt Blue plus Transparent Yellow and very small amount of Quinacridone Magenta.

5. Browns: Permanent Carmine plus Transparent Yellow and a small amount of Blue.



Step 2. First washes, underlying colour

The first stage is to wet the surface of the onion with clean water, for this I use a size 4 series 7 miniature brush. While the surface is still wet add the blue to the upper right area of the onion and the violet mix to the lower left half of the onion allowing them to blend. This colour will be preserved as a softer edge of colour which will create the impression of a receding edge, which is cooler on the light side and warmer on the shade side.

Allow to dry completely before adding the red.



Step 3. Selective Application of Paint to Build Colour and Form

Dampen the surface with clean water and begin to apply the reds. Follow the video for guidance. Note that the warmest most saturated reds are nearest to the center front (slightly left of the highlight).

Paint in the direction of the veins using the contour of the onion to guide you, this will also serve to delineate the veins in the onion skin. Adjust the red mix according to your particular onion.

Once dry, the fine veins can be added, a smaller brush such as a size 2 may be used for this purpose. Ensure that the veins are not overly heavy.



Step 4. Build Depth of Colour:

Start to build more depth of colour working with the dry brush modeling technique, this can be applied to either a dry surface or one that is slightly damp.

Begin to develop the form shadow by using a more concentrate mix of the shade colour. This colour can be achieved by adding some indanthrene blue into the Carmine mix, again this can be applied to a slightly damp surface to achieve a softer appearance.

Remember to refer to the introductory watercolour technique videos.



Step 5. Roots:

Add the roots using the brown mix. Work with a smaller brush, such as size 1 or 2 and paint a fine outline around the nearest veins, then start to paint those sitting further behind, remember to ensure that the underlaps/ overlaps are correctly aligned where it disappears and reappears. Keep the colour very light initially and once all veins are drawn in with the paint, the darkest areas can be filled in and the paler colour applied to the rest of the roots.

Return to make finishing touches at the end.



Step 6. Green Shoots:

Use a light green mix to paint the leaves, keep the highlights white and near to the base of the leaves, keep the area pale.

The colour can be intensified on the shade side and a small amount of cobalt can be used to define between the leaves at the point where they emerge from the onion.

Remember to retain the highlights and add any spots markings or brown areas last.



Step 7. Finishing touches

Finish the papery areas around the top of the onion as shown, including adding shadow under any folded skin.

Continue to define and deepen colour until finished but maintain highlights and softer edges where necessary.

Refer to the video tutorial for guidance.



Exercise:

Paint a red onion, following the general guidance provided in this tutorial and refer to the video. Keep in mind that onions vary in colour and you may need to make adjustments. Sprouting leaves are not often present but if you keep the onion for a while, leaves will appear.

Start by making a line drawing and then complete a final painting.

When you have finished all of the vegetable paintings and preparatory studies from Part 4 Vegetables, please email them to coursework@botanicalart-online.com