

Plant a Garden Quilt to Beautify Your Yard

Gardening meets quilting in a colorful flowerbed that reflects a distinctly American tradition.

Written by Kimber Mitchell & Susan Appleget Hurst, Photos by Blaine Moats



Scraps of fabric typically compose a quilt, but in an inventive display at Iowa State University's Reiman Gardens, colorful patchwork designs were created entirely with flowers and foliage. Ed Moran, the assistant garden superintendent at Reiman Gardens, transformed existing 15×15-foot trial beds into fanciful quilt-block gardens that energized a spacious field of green. Wind and the weather—critical concerns to pioneers living on the prairie—inspired many quilt patterns. This Double Pinwheel block, which was popular during the 1930s, is one such design. Moran chose yellow and red cockscomb (*Celosia*) for their feathery plumes that add a striking textural quality to the block. Together, they create a vivid and playful pinwheel pattern set off by a lush lavender background of low-growing blue flossflower (*Ageratum*).

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You Will Need:

A simple geometric quilt pattern, such as Double Pinwheel, Pinwheel, or Log Cabin, sketched on graph paper with plant placement indicated

Stakes and string

Square garden bed prepared for planting

Annual plants, such as those shown, that bloom repeatedly, don't spread aggressively, and are suited to the available sun exposure and soil type

Trowel, hose and watering nozzle, and garden shears



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Step 1



Mark the quilt pattern you have sketched on graph paper using stakes and string. Arrange the potted plants to fill the marked-off sections, placing the plants slightly closer than their expected spread at full growth.

Step 2



Working on one section at a time, plant each plant individually. Periodically stand back to check that your planting is even. When planting is complete, remove the stakes and string, and water the plants.

Step 3



Maintain the shapes in your growing quilt. Trim plants that spread out of bounds. If one area appears drier than others, give it a little extra water. Deadhead as needed to keep the colors vibrant.

Plant List



Red cockscomb (*Celosia* 'Fresh Look Red')

Yellow cockscomb (*Celosia* 'Fresh Look Yellow')

Flossflower (*Ageratum* 'Blue Danube')

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