

Rhododendron 'Percy Wiseman'

watercolour

34cm by 43cm

1. This is the preliminary pencil drawing for a botanical watercolour painting of Percy Wiseman rhododendron. Its flowers are a beautiful blend of pink and creamy flushing, with intense crimson buds. A few clusters were chosen to show the stages of colour the flowers go through as they mature.

I try to capture all the forms and structural details with my drawing so I can come back to it with colour notes and photographic reference at a later date.

The pencil can be lifted off gently with a putty rubber just before painting and after the first washes.

The drawing should be done as lightly as possible (here the scan was enhanced to make the drawing more visible).



2. The bud clusters were painted next, with tips of red flushing.

Then came the leaves. Here it was important to convey the blue-green tone of the mature leaves in contrast to the warmer green younger leaf clusters and the undersides. These contrasts aid visual perspective through the use of colour in what otherwise would be a flat painting.

I retained light areas on the leaves to convey their waxy reflective sheen.



3. Next came the unopened flower buds using deep crimsons in shadow areas to convey their tightly scrunched up nature.

These will be the deepest and most colourful area of the painting. The flower cluster on the left was chosen next - this being the most colourful cluster. I want to work towards the very pale mature cluster at the base to control the balance of colour as I work down the painting.

The reproductive parts of the centres of the flowers were masked to protect them from adjacent colour washes, as they are very light in tone.



4. I worked the remaining flower clusters from left to right, then the basal cluster, slowly reducing the amount of pink flushing in the petals, echoing what happens as the flowers mature in nature. Some cream and peach glazes were added to the whiter flowers as I felt the tones looked too cold.

The masking was removed from the reproductive parts for painting. It was surprising how much this brought the flowers to life.

Finally I added a glaze of Prussian Blue to the blue-green leaves at the back - lower left. This gave more visual depth and the tonal variation gave more life to the whole painting. Glazing to change colour relationships quickly and easily is one of the many advantages I love about watercolour

