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Tekniska förvaltningen
tekniska@boras.se
033-35 70 00
boras.se/blomsterprogram

First edition



BORÅS
ART
BIENNIAL
2026



Borås Blomsterprogram 2026

Plant dyeing

The 2026 floral program is a collaboration between aesthetics and industrial history.

Artist Kalle Hamm, together with the Parks Department, has created four compositions based on four locations in Borås with connections to dyeing and textile processing.

The collaboration has generated different perspectives on what plant material can be and has shown that the colour of a flower is rarely the same as the colour it produces in textiles.

We list the plant names in both English and Latin, so that you can create your own flower bed or plant a pot using plants from the program. Or why not try plant dyeing?

Enjoy,
City Gardener Anton Spets with colleagues



Borås Art Biennial 2026

The floral program is part of this year's art biennial, "Warps and Waves in the Fabric of Time". The biennial, curated by Taru Elfving, weaves together stories and testimonies that trace the legacy of the textile industry and its development. It explores the marks this history has left on landscapes, waterways, and people's lives.

Twelve international artists present works in a variety of materials and techniques, one of them being Kalle.

About Kalle

Kalle Hamm (born 1969 in Rauma, Finland) graduated as a visual artist from the Lahti Fine Art Institute in 1994 and has a Master of Arts from the University of Art and Design in 2002.

Hamm has dealt with the relationship between humans and plants in his works, in which plants are active agents that interact with their environment.

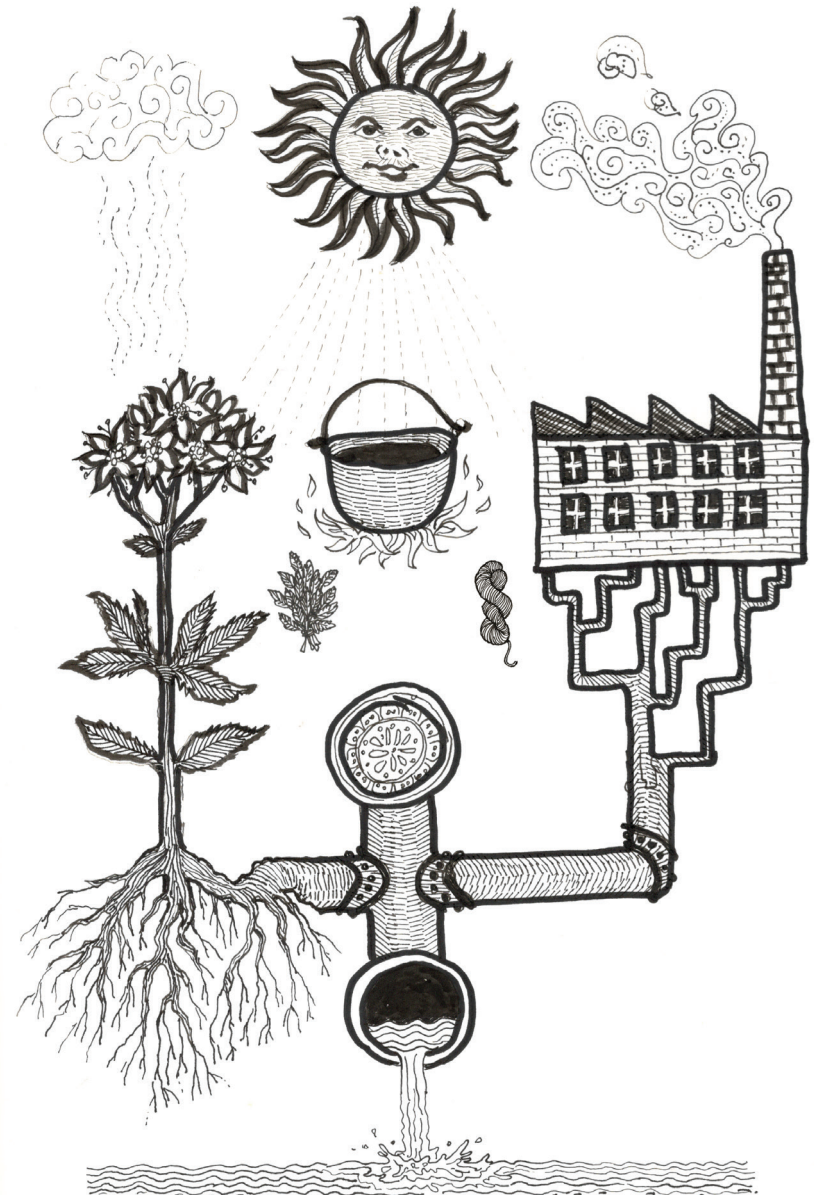
The following texts in the booklet, except the last spread, is written by Kalle.

Colour theory by plants

I had the pleasure of creating a work for the Borås Art Biennial 2026 that combines plants, colour, dyeing, pipes, and factories. The textile industry in Borås once required large amounts of water for its dyeing processes, and the Viskan River was used as a natural source of water intake and discharge. The river, factory, sewer system, and water pumping station formed a complex network of pipes that still crisscrosses under the city streets.

The starting point for the floral program plantings was the plants traditionally used in textile dyeing in Sweden. The plants were organised according to four themes based on the shades obtained from the plants in the dyeing process: red, yellow, green, and blue. The shade obtained is not always the same as the colour of the plant's flowers, as it is affected by the mordant and other factors. The planting patterns were inspired by the patterns on the manhole covers in the city of Borås.

Plants that were guaranteed to bloom throughout the summer had to be included in the plantings, even if they were not actual dye plants. The choices were influenced by the height of the plant, its flowering time, durability, and non-toxicity.



Concept sketch.

Red

The red colour of flowers is due to anthocyanins. The pH value of the cell fluid affects the shade of colour. If it is acidic inside the cell, the flower is red; if neutral, it is purple; if alkaline, it is blue. Birds and butterflies can distinguish shades of red well, but to bees they appear mainly dark grey.

Stadsparken 1905

In the 19th century, the historic factories were located in the city center. The dye works in particular were situated along the river, as they required large amounts of water for their dyeing processes.



Photo: Sörners Bildarkiv



Plant Species and Dyes



Wood dock, *Rumex sanguineus*

Common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) is a weed. It was replaced by its close relative, wood dock (*R. sanguineus*), which is not known to have been used in plant dyeing.



Creeping Jenny, *Lysimachia 'Sunburst'*

The roots of the yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*), a relative of the creeping Jenny (*L. nummularia*), produce brown tones, while the shoots produce yellow tones.



Hollyhock
Alcea rosea
'Crimson'



Hollyhock
Alcea rosea
'Apricot'



Hollyhock
Alcea rosea
'Lemon'

Hollyhock

The petals of hollyhocks come in black, purple, and brown.



Canary Island date palm,

Phoenix canariensis

This particular palm species has not been used in plant dyeing, but its relative, the rattan palm (*Calamus draco*), produces a red dye.

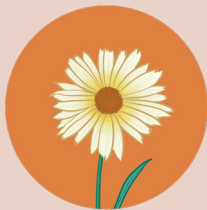


Chinese fountain grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides 'Sky Rocket'*

This plant has not been used in plant dyeing, but fit aesthetically into this planting scheme.



Tickseed
Coreopsis
'Sangria'



Tickseed
Coreopsis
'Uptick Cream'

Tickseed

The flowers of the tickseed produce a red dye, and *Coreopsis cardaminifolia* in particular is a good dye plant.



African daisy, *Osteospermum 'Summersmile Sunrise'*

This plant has not been used in plant dyeing, but fit aesthetically into this planting scheme.

Yellow

The colour of yellow flowers comes from carotenoids, which are easy for plants to produce and easily visible to bees and butterflies. In plant dyeing, the petals of many yellow-flowered plants naturally produce yellow shades, but many other shades can also be obtained by using different parts of the plant.

Druveforsfallet 1927

The Viskan River is one of the main reasons why the textile industry began to concentrate in Borås. The river was modified to suit the needs of industry by regulating its flow and course to serve the factories. Druveforsfallet, close by Druvkilen, powered a mill that ground flour and Breslija plant, which was used to dye textiles. The factory beside the fall was the city's first textile factory and had its own hydro turbine.

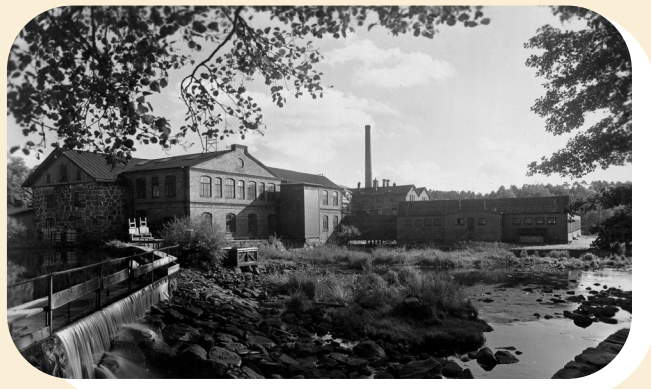


Photo: Borås Stadsarkiv



Plant Species and Dyes



Mexican grain amaranth, *Amaranthus paniculatus* 'Green Thumb'

There is no information on the use of Mexican grain amaranth in plant dyeing, but its close relative *Amaranthus retroflexus*, produces shades of yellow and grey.



Dahlia, *Dahlia pinnata* 'Justice'

Dahlia flowers come in various shades of yellow and brown.



Euphorbia graminea

There is no information on the use of *Euphorbia graminea* in dyeing, but it was used to replace the poisonous leafy spurge (*E. esula*), which produces shades of yellow and brown.



Common marigold, *Calendula officinalis* 'Snow Princess'

Boiling the flowers of the common marigold produces shades of yellow and yellow-orange. The leaves produce shades of yellow and cream using alum mordanting (a method to make the color adhere better).



Snapdragon, *Antirrhinum majus* Snapshot 'Yellow'

Snapdragon produces shades of green and gold, but the species is not particularly significant in plant dyeing.



Parsley, *Petroselinum Latifolium*

Parsley yields shades of yellow and yellow-green. Fresh leaves and stems yield shades of cream using alum mordanting (a method to make the color adhere better).



China aster, *Callistephus chinensis* 'The Blues'

Greenish-yellow shades can be obtained from Chinese aster flowers using chrome mordanting (a method to make the color adhere better and to alter the hue).



Bergamot, *Monarda fistulosa*

This plant has not been used in plant dyeing, but fit aesthetically into this planting scheme.



Black-eyed Susan, *Thunbergia alata* 'Susy Dark Eye'

Black-eyed Susan is not a dye plant, but some kind of climbing plant was also needed for the planting sites. Unfortunately, no climbing plant with dyeing properties and in the required quantity could be found.

Green

The green colour of plants is due to chlorophyll, which is also responsible for photosynthesis, a process that is vital for plants. In autumn, trees transfer nutrients and chlorophyll to their roots, causing the leaves to lose their green colour. The yellow and red hues of the leaves are due to carotenoids and anthocyanins remaining in the leaves.

View from Krokshallsberget 1920

The construction of the railway network and industry went hand in hand. Importing raw materials to factories and exporting finished products required good transport connections both domestically and abroad. The current railway station originally served as a depot. The station itself was located next to the Textile Fashion Center.



Photo: Borås Stadsarkiv

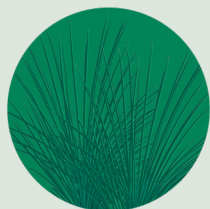


Plants Species and Dyes



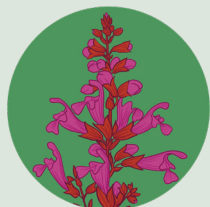
Wild carrot, *Daucus carota* 'Dara'

The above-ground parts of carrots produce green and yellow colours, while the root produces orange and yellow colours, but carrots are not actually used as a dye plant.



Rush, *Juncus* 'Blue Dart'

Due to availability, Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*) was replaced with a cultivated close relative, *Juncus* 'Blue Dart', which is not known to have dyeing properties.



Culinary salvia, *Salvia salgoon* 'Strawberry Lake'

The upper parts of culinary sage (*Salvia officinalis*) dye wool yellowish when mordanted with alum, yellow when mordanted with chrome, and greenish grey when mordanted with iron.



Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*

Rosemary leaves can be used to make green dye.



Silver birch, *Betula pendula*

Silver birch leaves produce various shades of brown, yellow, golden yellow, and bright green.



Musk mallow, *Malva moschata*

Mallow flowers produce shades of blue and green, but dyes made from them are not durable.



Red-leaf hibiscus, *Hibiscus acetosella* 'Mahogany Splendor'

Many hibiscus flowers produce shades of blue and green, which are affected by the pH value of the dyeing liquid.



Spotted dead-nettle, *Lamium maculatum* 'Pink Pewter'

Spotted dead-nettle has not been used in plant dyeing, but it was chosen because it flowers reliably throughout the summer and is aesthetically suitable for planting.



Dill, *Anethum graveolens* 'Superdukat'

Dill has not been used in plant dyeing, but it was chosen because it is aesthetically pleasing when planted.

Blue

The blue colour of flowers is due to anthocyanins, which are found in the alkaline cell sap of flowers. The colour of a flower changes if the pH value of the cell sap changes, as is often seen in petunias and hydrangeas. Butterflies and bees can see both blue and ultraviolet light very well.

View from Annelundsparken 1887

Amrotius Butsch built the Annelund estate in 1827. It burned down in 1959, after which the area was redeveloped as a park. Factory managers once played a key role in shaping the cityscape. In addition to factories, they also established parks and ornamental gardens in various parts of the city.



Photo: Borås Stadsarkiv



Plant species and Dyes



Marguerite jaune, *Rudbeckia hirta*
'Goldilocks'

Marguerite jaunes come in various shades of brown, so they would be better suited to yellow or red plantings.



Snapdragon, *Antirrhinum majus*
Candy Top 'Yellow'

Snapdragon produces green and gold colours, but it is not very important in plant dyeing.



Signet marigold, *Tagetes tenuifolia*

The signet marigold comes in various shades of yellow, which makes it more suitable for yellow plantings, but due to its durability, it was placed as a border plant in blue plantings.



Common chicory, *Cichorium intybus*

Boiling common chicory produces orange and blue dyes. In North America, the plant has also been used to produce yellow dye.



Delphinium, *Delphinium 'Breezin'*

The flowers of the *delphinium* come in various shades of blue, but they are not long-lasting.



Sunflower, *Helianthus annuus*
'Dancing Sun'

Different shades of grey, green, orange, and yellow can be obtained from sunflowers using various extraction methods. The seeds also produce black, dark blue, and violet colours.



Bidens 'Golden Empire'

Bidens humilis produces a yellow colour, while the flowers produce a violet colour.



Lawn leaf, *Dichondra repens 'Emerald Falls'*

This plant has not been used in plant dyeing, but is aesthetically suitable as a border plant and can withstand wear and tear in public places.



Silver ragwort, *Cineraria maritima*
'Silver Dust'

This plant has not been used in plant dyeing, but is aesthetically suitable as a border plant and can withstand wear and tear in public places.

Join our guided flower walks and explore the art biennial

Guided flower walks

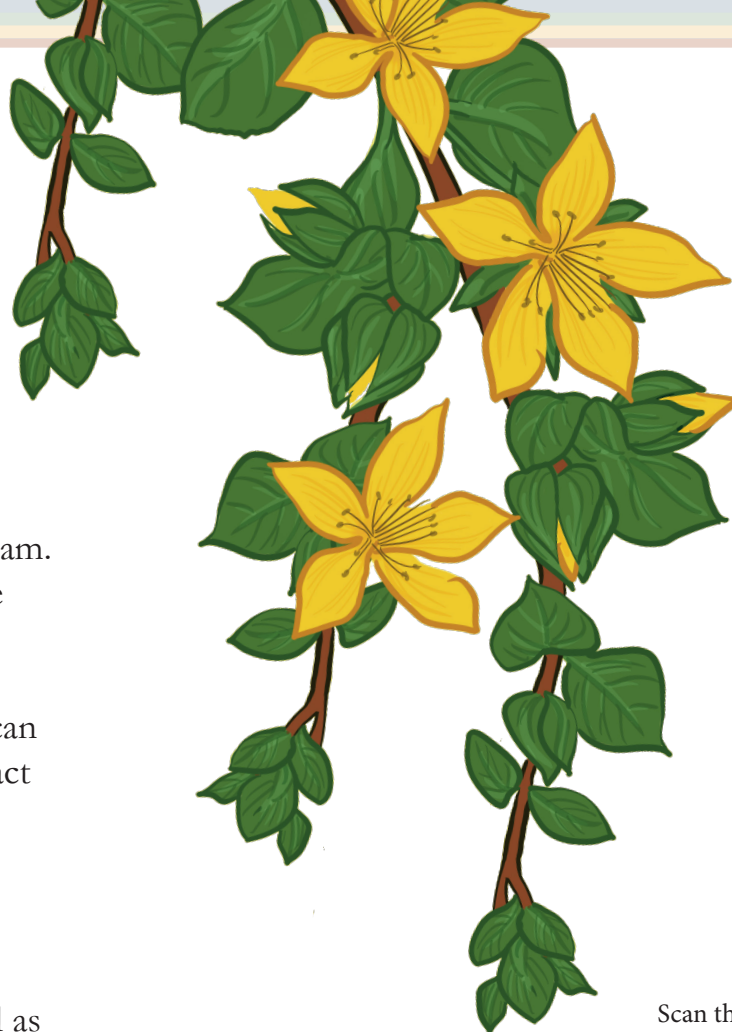
Let us guide you through our plantings and tell you more about the ideas and inspiration behind the planting program. Guided walks will be offered on selected dates during the summer. Book your ticket at boras.com.

If you prefer to explore the plantings on your own, you can find a map at boras.se/blomsterprogram showing the exact locations of all the compositions.

Explore the biennial

From 30 May to 27 September 2026, Borås Art Biennial unfolds across our shared public spaces in the city as well as in Borås konstmuseum and Textilmuseet.

During the biennial, visitors can experience art in many forms – from textiles, video, and photography to mural, installations, and sculpture. Artworks across the city are accessible at all hours, and admission to exhibitions at both museums is free.



Scan the QR-code for
information in English



Texts: Kalle Hamm and Anton Spets

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