

ArtGrow. Creative



SPRING CACTUS

INSTRUCTIONS

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Getting Started



This bright, modern cactus painting is all about bold color, playful texture, and easy abstract florals. We'll build the background first, then layer greens, blooms, and outlines to make everything pop. If it looks a little "blah" halfway through — perfect. It's about to come alive in the final steps.



Painting Title: Spring Cactus

Skill Level: Beginner-Friendly

Approximate Time to Complete:

60-90 Minutes

Supplies Needed:

- **Canvas** – Pre-stretched , sketched and primed, size of your choice.
- **Acrylic Paints** – Choose from the following colors:

White	Light Green
Black	Lime Green
Bright Turquoise / Aqua Blue	Metalic Gold
Hot Pink / Deep Fuscia	
Light Pink / Pastel Pink	
Dark Green	

- **Brushes** – A variety of sizes, including flat, round, and detail brushes.
- **Palette** – For mixing colors.
- **Water Container** – To rinse brushes.
- **Paper Towels or Rags** – For cleaning brushes and surfaces.
- **Apron or Old Shirt** – To protect clothing from paint.
- **Easel** (optional) – For comfortable painting posture.

Feel free to tailor the colors and supplies to suit your painting project!

Step-by-Instructions

Step 1: Paint the Background Base

Use a large brush (or 1" flat) and paint the background around your pre-traced design using Sea Breeze (turquoise). Work around the cactus shapes, flowers, and pot, but don't stress about perfect edges yet. This layer should look bright and loose, like a fun wash of color behind the design.

Step 2: Add Vertical Green Streaks

Without overthinking it, add Yellow Green into the turquoise background using vertical streaks (top to bottom strokes). Blend lightly so the background has movement and variation. You're going for a lively, imperfect blend — not a smooth, solid wall of color.

Step 3: Create Texture With a Palette Knife

Put out 24K Gold and Black paint. Using a palette knife, scrape small amounts across the background in random patches (especially near the edges). Wipe the knife between colors as needed. This should look messy, textured, and modern — like fun "scraped" accents over the turquoise.

Step 4: Paint the Table Base (Gray Band)

Using the 1" flat brush, mix White with a tiny touch of Black to create a medium gray. Paint the bottom band of the canvas (the tabletop area) with horizontal strokes. While it's still slightly wet, scrape a little Gold and Black texture into the table with the palette knife for extra interest.

Step 5: Paint the Cactus Bases (Two Color Families)

Using the 1" flat brush, paint the cactus shapes in two different green blends so they don't look identical. For one cactus, use Dark Green with touches of Light Green blended right on the canvas. For the other cactus, use Yellow Green + Festive Green blended together. Let the greens overlap slightly — you'll outline later, so it doesn't need to be perfect.

Step 6: Add Extra Green Dimension

With the same brush, add small touches of a third green (optional: a tiny hint of Kelly Green) in a few spots to create shading and variety. Keep it subtle — just enough to make the cactus look more interesting than one flat color. At this stage, it should look like simple green shapes with soft blending.

Step-by-Instructions Cont'd

Step 7: Base Coat the Flowers

Using the 1" flat brush, paint the flower shapes with a solid coat of Royal Fuchsia (or your darkest pink). Don't worry about petals yet — just fill the whole flower area so you have a strong base. This step should look bold and flat on purpose.

Step 8: Add Lighter Pink "Blobs" for Highlights

Still using a brush (1" flat or medium), add lighter pink tones by "blobbing" in Carousel Pink and then Cotton Candy (or pink + extra white). Place lighter blobs toward the center and a few along the outer edges. Your flowers should now look chunky and abstract — that's exactly what we want before outlining.

Step 9: Paint the Little Green Succulent Pods

Switch to a #6 round brush. Using a dark green, paint the small pod shapes by making a simple line and then stamping oval "thumbprint" blobs along it. Add a touch of a lighter green on top of each pod for dimension. These should look like cute little green ovals, not perfect leaves.

Step 10: Add Black Hearts and Dot Clusters

With the #6 round brush and black paint, add a few small hearts in the background. Make them loose and a little funky — not stiff clip-art hearts. Add small dot clusters (often in groups of 3) around the background to fill space and make it feel playful.

Step 11: Add White Stripes and White Dots on the Cactus

Using the 1" flat brush and white paint, paint a few simple vertical stripe lines on the cactus (use your pinky on the canvas as a guide if helpful). Then flip the brush and add white dots (aim for 3–4 dots at a time before reloading paint so the dots stay crisp). This is where the cactus starts to look designed and intentional.

Step 12: Add Small Pink Blooms on the Cactus

Rinse your brush and use pink to paint small cactus blooms (simple little "M" shapes or loose blobs). Keep them quick and simple — these are cute accents, not detailed flowers. Add a few in different spots so the cactus feels lively.

Step-by-Instructions Cont'd

Step 13: Outline the Pot and Cactus

Use black paint with either a liner brush (slower and controlled) or a 1" flat brush (faster) to outline the pot edges and cactus shapes. If using the big brush, load paint so it's thin on the bristles and pull confident lines. This step instantly sharpens the whole painting — don't worry if your outline isn't perfect, it should feel hand-drawn.

Step 14: Add Black "Doodle" Lines (Optional but Fun)

With the liner brush and black paint, add a few loose loop-de-loops and flowing lines in the background. The key is to commit to the stroke — one smooth motion looks better than short hesitant marks. This adds personality and makes the piece feel modern and playful.

Step 15: Define the Flower Petals With Black Lines

Using the liner brush and black paint, turn your pink blobs into petals by drawing simple curved lines. Start with one small shape in the center, then add rounded petal curves that come out and return back in. This doesn't need to be realistic — just consistent, curved "petal" sections that make the flower read clearly.

Step 16: Add White Highlights to the Flowers

With a clean brush and white paint, add a few quick white strokes inside the petals for highlight. Then add a few white dots (again, dot clusters look great). Be careful not to drag through wet black lines — gentle taps work best here.

Step 17: Add White "Spines" on the Cactus

Using the liner brush and white paint, add tiny short marks along the sides of the cactus sections. These are simple little flicks — small, light, and spaced out. This detail makes the cactus pop and gives it that finished, polished look.

Step 18: Final Touches

Step back and check balance. Add a few extra dots, brighten a flower highlight, deepen a cactus shadow, or add one more heart if a spot feels empty. If your painting looks "busy," stop — this design looks best when it still has breathing room.

Tips

If your background looks flat or boring:

Add a few more vertical streaks of light green or scrape a little metallic gold or black with the palette knife near the edges. Texture brings this background to life.

If the palette knife feels scary or messy:

Use less paint than you think you need and scrape lightly. If it feels like too much, let it dry and paint over it — this painting is very forgiving.

If your cactus looks muddy or dull:

Let it dry, then add a brighter green on top. Layering light over dark brings the cactus back to life instantly.

If your cactus shapes look uneven:

That's okay. Once the black outline is added, uneven edges disappear and become part of the style.

If your flowers look like blobs (not flowers yet):

Perfect. They're supposed to at this stage. The black outline and white highlights are what turn blobs into blooms.

If your black outlines feel shaky:

Slow down, load your brush well, and use your pinky finger on the canvas as a guide. You can also switch to a liner brush or paint marker if that feels easier.

If your white dots smear into wet paint:

Let the area dry for a few minutes, then try again. Dots look best when the layer underneath is dry.

If the painting feels too busy:

Stop adding details and step back. This design looks best when it has breathing room — you don't need to fill every space.

If you feel stuck or frustrated halfway through:

That's the awkward middle — everyone hits it. Keep going. This painting comes together quickly at the outlining stage.

You Did It!

You've finished your night landscape painting—great work! Before you hang it up or gift it to someone special, here are a few optional finishing touches to really make it shine:

FINAL CARE & DISPLAY TIPS

- **Seal your painting** with a clear acrylic sealer (spray or brush-on) to protect it from dust, smudges, and moisture. Be sure it's completely dry before sealing.
- Want to skip framing? Try **gliding a sponge dipped in black paint** along the edges of the canvas for a crisp, finished look. It makes the artwork feel complete and polished on its own.
- If you do want to frame it, floating **frames from Amazon** are an affordable and easy way to elevate your piece. They make the painting really pop!

Now step back and admire what you've created—you brought this canvas to life!



Behind the Brush



Hey! I'm Susan,

I created ArtGrow Creative because I know what it feels like to doubt your creativity — and how powerful it is to rediscover it. You don't need to be an "artist" to make something beautiful. You just need space to try, play, and surprise yourself.

Whether this was your first time picking up a brush or one of many, I hope you felt that spark. That moment where you realize you're allowed to create just because you want to.

Thanks for painting with us. Let's keep growing — one brushstroke at a time.

*Susan
O'Sullivan
Choros*

Share Your Work

We'd love to see what you've created! Post your painting using **#ArtGrowCreative** and be sure to follow and tag us on Instagram **@artgrow.creative**.

Prefer to share by email?

Send a photo of your finished piece (or your painting in action!) to susan@heyimsusan.com — we love seeing what you've made.

Let's Do This Again!

Paint Kits: Order a paint kit that comes with everything you need — brushes, paint, and step-by-step instructions.

Private Events: Book a Private Party for birthdays, team events, or a creative night in with friends.

Pop-Up Paint Socials: Join a Pop-Up Paint Social happening in your community — no experience needed, just show up and paint!

Stay Connected: Join our mailing list to find out when the next event is happening near you!



Troubleshooting Common Acrylic Painting Challenges

Even the most confident artists run into little hiccups! Here are some common painting issues and quick fixes to help you troubleshoot with ease, but remember, mistakes are part of the process. Trust the journey, and most importantly—enjoy creating!

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1. Paint is streaky or see-through

Problem: The canvas is showing through too much.

Fix: Let it dry fully and add a second thin layer. Acrylic paint works best in layers—don't try to glob on too much at once.

2. Colours are muddy or blending weirdly

Problem: You're mixing colours on the canvas that weren't meant to mix.

Fix: Let each section dry completely before painting beside or on top of it. A quick blast with a hairdryer helps speed things up!

3. Brushstrokes look too harsh

Problem: You want smoother blends or softer texture.

Fix: Use a light hand and slightly dampen your brush with clean water to help the paint glide more smoothly. Blend while the paint is still wet.

4. Paint is drying too fast

Problem: You're losing time to blend or adjust.

Fix: Work in smaller sections or lightly mist your palette with water to keep paints workable. Some people also use a wet palette.

5. You can't see your sketch anymore

Problem: You painted over your outlines and feel lost.

Fix: That's okay! You can always re-sketch with chalk or a water-soluble pencil, or freehand with a brush or marker during outlining.

6. Paint looks clumpy or uneven

Problem: Too much paint or an old brush.

Fix: Wipe off excess paint before applying. Use a thin, even layer and try a softer brush. Clumps can often be smoothed once dry with a dry brush or sanding block.

7. The paint is lifting when you try to paint over it

Problem: You're going over an area that's not quite dry.

Fix: Stop and dry the area completely before layering again.

8. You're feeling stuck or frustrated

Problem: It's not looking how you imagined.

Fix: Take a step back and remember that acrylics are super forgiving. You can always paint over something or adjust it later. Keep going—perfection isn't the goal, progress is.