

Garden Photography: Tips for the “Budding” Photographer

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Welcome, everyone, to the world of garden photography. I sincerely hope that you enjoy and can benefit from the information in this packet and from today’s presentation.

Types of Cameras

1.
 - a. DSLR – A camera that gives you the ability to interchange lenses.
 - i. Give you more flexibility
 - ii. Different zoom lenses
 - iii. Faster shutter firing
 - iv. More manual controls
 - b. Point and Shoot – Can range between ultra compact to larger zoom style.
 - i. More convenience
 - ii. Smaller size means more portable
 - iii. Lighter weight
 - iv. However, the shutter is slightly more delayed and you are slightly limited on available accessories

(Fairly) Universal Camera Settings used for Flower Photography!

2.
 - a. AUTO
 - i. Good for general shooting, but fairly limited
 - ii. Camera doesn’t know what it’s taking a picture of, so it guesses based on what light it sees, not what the subject matter actually is.
 - b. LANDSCAPE
 - i. This mode is still fully automatic, but much better for outdoor photos
 - ii. This tells the camera to favor greens and blues (more “nature” colors)
 - iii. This mode also tries to increase the Depth of Field in your image (more on that in just a moment), creating sharper backgrounds. Not ideal for close ups or individual flowers, but great for wide shots of the garden.
 - c. MACRO (Flower Mode)
 - i. Great for individual flower shots. Helps to isolate focus on a particular portion of your image.
 - ii. This mode tends to work best on Point and Shoot models of cameras. In DSLR’s it is better to use the Aperture Priority Mode.

- d. A/AV (Aperture Priority)
 - i. This is a mode that not many of the P&S cameras are going to have. However, every DSLR will... no matter the experience level.
 - ii. By controlling your Aperture, you can control your Depth of Field, allowing your camera to set your shutter speed for you.
 - iii. DOF = the amount of focus in front of and behind your subject.
 - 1. Smaller aperture numbers (1.8, 2, 2.8, 3.5) give blurrier backgrounds, allowing you to pop your subject more in your frame.
 - 2. Larger aperture numbers (8, 11, 16, 22) give you sharper backgrounds.
 - 3. To access these numbers, simply set your camera to the Aperture Priority Mode. You will have a dial or wheel somewhere on your camera that will change these numbers.
 - 4. This mode allows for more manual control of other settings as well, though we will not get into all of these here.

- e. ISO (film speed... yes, I know this is digital photography!)
 - i. If your camera offers you the ability to manually control your ISO, I would heavily recommend that you do so.
 - ii. By keeping your ISO low (either 100 or 200) you will get punchier colors and more overall sharpness to your images. (great for garden photography)
 - iii. Higher ISO choices (800 or 1600) will speed up your shutter, allowing you to handhold shots you normally couldn't, but that comes at a price: dull muted colors and grainy or "noisy" images. (not ideal for garden images)

Time of Day

- 3. The time of day you decide to take your images *will* make or break your images!
 - a. Noon on a sunny day is hands down the absolute worst time to take pictures in your garden.
 - i. When it comes to lighting for your pictures, more isn't always better. Quality of light far surpasses Quantity of light!
 - ii. Noon light will produce vibrant colors, but also blown out highlights and excessively hard shadows. These will take away from the beauty of the garden.

 - b. Shoot when the light is even.
 - i. Early mornings or late afternoons are the best, when the light tends to be warmer.
 - ii. On the other hand, overcast days are PERFECT for close ups and flower photography: virtually no shadows create great even tones!

- c. Shoot when the dew is still on the leaves... or...
 - i. If you can't bring yourself to rise and shine, bring a small spray bottle of water to mist the leaves. This will give the impression of fine early morning images.

Tools of the Trade

- 4. There is always an array of tools that you can get to improve your images. However,
 - a. Tripods
 - i. Always an incredible way to insure that you can get the shot you want.
 - ii. Tripods offer stability if the lighting is a little low, creating a slow shutter speed. **DO NOT TRY TO HANDHOLD VERY SLOW SHUTTER SPEED SHOTS.**
 - b. Remotes / Cable Release
 - i. Offer an extra bit of stability while your camera is on a tripod.
 - c. Reflectors / Diffusers
 - i. Great way to create shade on a day when you have no choice but to shoot in harsh lighting.
 - d. Macro Lenses – For your DSLR
 - i. If you have a DSLR, investing in a dedicated Macro Lens is one of the best things you can spend your money on.
 - ii. They allow for you to get incredibly close to your subject while maintaining incredible detail.
 - iii. Obviously, all of the name brand companies offer great options for lenses, but another option is the Tamron 60mm Macro F/2. It is a phenomenal lens!
 - e. Polarizing Filters – For your DSLR
 - i. Polarizing filters are an AMAZING addition to any lens arsenal.
 - ii. They saturate colors while removing or significantly reducing glare on glass, water, and vegetation. (note: this works well on skin tone as well)
 - iii. Blues are bluer, Reds are redder, and Greens are greener.

Composition

- 5. There are several things you can do when you are looking through the lens to improve your images.
 - a. Watch your background.
 - i. This is crucial for any type of photography. By watching the background, you can keep clutter out of the frame that can, and probably will, take away from your image.
 - ii. Keep an eye on things such as debris, power lines, buildings, etc...

b. Rule of Thirds

- i. Perfectly centered subjects make for static, uninteresting images. Divide the frame into thirds—imagine a tic-tac-toe grid—and place your subject on a cross-line.
- ii. Keep in mind... This is not a concrete “rule,” but by keeping your subjects out of the center of the frame, you tend to make a more interesting photograph!

c. Try different camera angles.

- i. By getting down low or shooting from a perspective that you normally don't see things, you can create stunning images.
- ii. If your camera offers a swivel screen LCD... use it! Especially if you have a tripod! This will help you get the really low or interesting angle images without having to crawl or be a contortionist!

In Garden or any other type of nature photography, it all comes down to slowing down, paying attention to detail and controlling the things that you can control. By taking the time to see your garden in a new light (sometimes literally) you can impress your friends and stun your neighbors.

I sincerely hope that these tips and tricks have proven useful in the enhancement of your nature photography. If you have any questions about tips, tricks, or gear, please do not hesitate to call Bedford Camera and Video. Our sales staff is knowledgeable and always ready to help!