

Outdoor Flower Photography Tips

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Beware of blowing out details. Control your exposure by using Exposure Compensation. Try under-exposing or bracketing.

Use macro or close-up lenses or a close-up setting for tight shots or to isolate the subject. Use a wide-angle lens for a dramatic 'environmental shot.' Telephoto lens are useful for creating compression.

Create a dynamic composition by NOT placing the subject smack-dab in the center of the frame. Consider rule of thirds to place the subject off-center and higher or lower in the frame.

Master the aperture! Large aperture (small f-stop number) will yield a very shallow depth of field which can isolate a subject. Small aperture (large f-stop number) can create a sharp image from close foreground to infinity.

Manually focus to control what you want to be sharp...especially with a shallow depth of field. Consider the plane of focus of your subject: the more perpendicular your camera's sensor is to the subject matter, the more or it will be in focus. If a breeze causes issues with manual focus, try continuous auto-focus mode.

Consider the background. With a large aperture you can create a very pleasing backdrop of soft-focused bokeh.

Tripod and cable release are essential for close-up/macro shots. No tripod? For field photography use a walking stick and your arm as a brace for the camera - grasp the stick at any height you're going to shoot and rest your camera/lens across your arm.

Water drops can add a special element to flowers. A spray bottle with a 1:1 mix of water and glycerin is a trick often employed by professionals, the glycerin creates a greater surface tension in the water making the drops slightly larger and more dramatic.

Look for patterns and exploit them. Odd numbers/arrangements – especially 3 or 5 – are aesthetically pleasing. Look for the flower(s) that stand out, that have some unique, compelling and/or pleasing aspect about them.

A diffuser or scrim will help mitigate a harsh sun. A ring flash can help add concentrated light if desired. A reflector can bounce light where needed.

Go abstract, be creative.

Observe and get to know the insects as they move around on flowers, they make fascinating subjects themselves. Take their portrait while focusing on their eyes. Learn how to move your focus point quickly, or focus on the insect and recompose so that the insect is in focus but not necessarily centered.

Live-view (with a tripod and cable release) can be helpful, especially for potted subjects that can easily be turned or otherwise arranged to create an interesting perspective or arrangement. Creating an interesting composition is one of the most difficult things in macro photography and often just small changes in direction will have a dramatic effect on composition. Move around your subject, try shooting from above, next to, and below. Lay on the ground if necessary!

Think in terms of exposure, might your final processed image look good in high or low-key rather than properly exposed?

Pay attention to where the light is coming from and where the shadows are lying. Side lighting has a very different quality than back lighting and the same is true with front lighting.

Look for flowers/scenes where the color is saturated and not flat. An overcast day can help saturate the flowers' colors. A polarizer can also be useful.

Useful Websites:

<http://ronbigelow.com/articles/flowers-1/flowers-1.html>

<http://ronbigelow.com/articles/flowers-2/flowers-2.html>

<http://ronbigelow.com/articles/flowers-3/flowers-3.html>

Some Great Examples:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/poesie/>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/anymotion/sets/72157628204478717/>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/anymotion/sets/72157630157927714/>