



FLORAL PHOTOGRAPHY

By Rosita Manning FPSNZ

Probably the most important element in floral photography is patience, I am going to base this article on the word **patience**.

P - Patience - Flower photography demands heaps of patience, if you are not patient this hobby can assist you towards becoming a more relaxed person. As you absorb the subject and prepare to express yourself with creativity, many hours can slip by with only a couple of images captured.

I am a perfectionist myself and like to believe that once I have completed a shoot the images I have made are the very best I can achieve. One should always look through the lens before pushing the shutter for any distractions such as over-powering highlights, insects that can just arrive as one is about to record the image, damaged or wilting leaves or petals. Also, run your eye around the edges of the frame for any light areas that could distract and draw the eye away from the centre of attention.

A - Attention to detail - A damaged bloom or a leaf with an insect hole will immediately attract the eye, leading it away from absorbing the total image. Very often, we overlook such imperfections, only to have them become obvious during viewing. These days with digital, it is a simpler task and less time-consuming to clone out these distractions later.

T - Time - Give yourself plenty of time and do not try to rush this type of work. At times my best blooms burst forth during 40-knot winds, this is a challenge, but believe me I never miss an opportunity to get that shot. Why put off what can be done now – it is now or never. With my camera on a tripod, I sit and wait (very often under an umbrella) there's always a second of calm every minute. I have used this theory for over 30 years and believe me its correct. My best and favorite images are taken in these conditions.

The more overcast the better for floral photography, blooms are always at their freshest early in the morning and after a shower.

I - Ideas - Most of my successful images are created before I take the lens off the camera. Generally, I plan my shoot in advance, sometimes I shift away from my original conception. I look at it through the lens then move around and look at it from other angles, often end up with several different images of the same flower from different perspectives.

Pre-planning ensures I have the required backgrounds and props at hand. I grow most of my own flowers but sometimes I have a bright idea and the blooms I wish to use are out of season and a trip to a well-stocked florist soon provides the required flowers and more often than not a selection of other beauties.

E - Equipment - I am a strong believer in only purchasing the equipment I have a need, when that wears out or breaks down, I then consider replacing it. Get to know your equipment well, the last thing I need is a situation where I am wondering what that button is for and should I under or over expose. Learn to use the aperture priority and manual modes and forget about automatic.

By knowing our F Stops well, we then have more control over all aspects of photography with these two modes. Read your manual thoroughly and put your camera to the test. Get to know what each F Stop gives by setting a scene (could be a row of trees) then with camera on tripod work your way through each F Stop. Print the photos, you will learn from this and quickly understand what your camera can do for you.

An assignment I always set my students when teaching is, take 10 shots of one subject i.e. a flower, water, a bracelet, a shell, a watch, a piece of fruit, the list is endless.

This can be done using a variety of lenses, filters and/or from different angles using different lighting and so on. In the beginning students just want to put it in the too-hard basket, but in the end when the results are shown on the last night of the course, it is simply amazing what they have created and how much they have absorbed during the course. They have enjoyed the challenging exercise, which made them think and explore the topic in more depth.

Floral photography requires a Macro lens or a set of tubes, a longer focal length lens can be useful on floral decor set-ups where we create the scene with props.

A reflector, a sturdy tripod, stakes for propping a stubborn stalk, pegs are also useful for moving that stubborn background leaf to a more desirable position and of course a camera.

N -Notes - A notebook and pen are useful additions to an already over full camera bag to record those exposures and other information we may need for reference at a later time.

C - Complimentary Harmony - To me this is one of the most important elements of floral photography coupled with impact of colour and design. Keep it simple and uncomplicated, the more colours you use the harder it is to work with. I try to keep to three, making sure they compliment each other, for instance I would probably think twice about using orange and pink together. An artist's colour wheel is very handy if you require assistance in selecting complimentary colours, even paint charts can have other uses.

E - Experiment - The more we experiment using our creative talents the better photographers we become. Digital allows us to be more extravagant without cost, a bonus that allows us to explore in depth our favorite pastime. I hope you enjoy experimenting with floral photography and achieve as much enjoyment from it as I do

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