

# GARDENING AND GROWING

By Kent DuFault

One of the best ways to get started with storytelling in photography is to concentrate your efforts on a topic that you know really well.

For example, it could be quilting, motorcycle touring, yoga, fishing, cooking, etc.

For this creativity prompt, I have selected the topic gardening and growing.

I selected this topic because it's relatively universal. You don't have to be a hardcore

gardener to understand the process of how things are planted, grow, or where to find them.

Image 001 is a great storytelling example for this prompt.

The photograph is on topic: gardening and growing. It has a strong human element for interest. Plus, not only do we learn that this woman likes growing flowers, but her resources are limited by her location. That's a story.



Image 001 – Photograph by Quaid Lagan

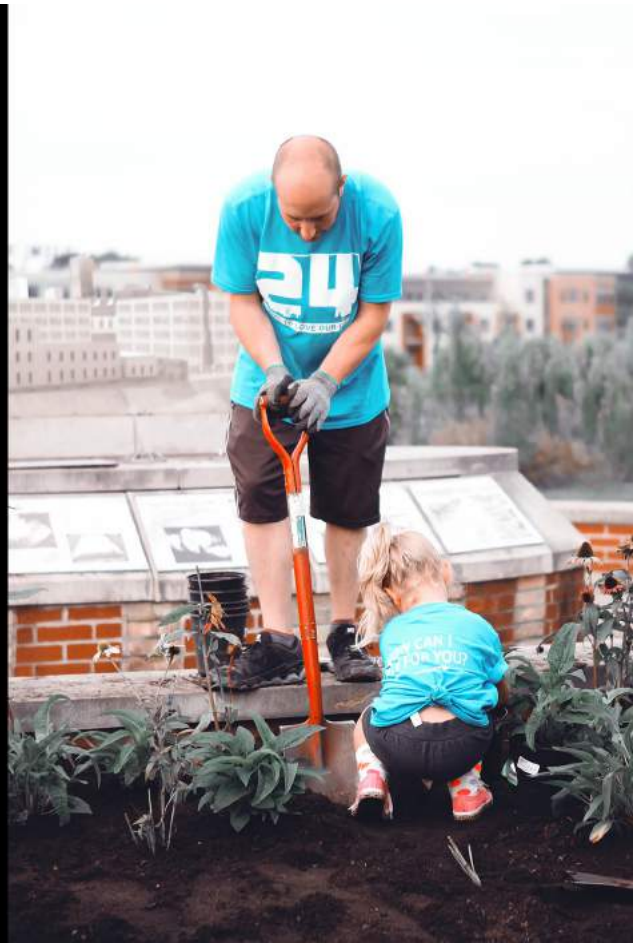


Image 002 (Left; Right) – Photographs by Anna Earl

A perfect situation for storytelling photography is an event. Think of yourself as a journalist covering the Olympics. What story is there to be told?

Now apply that thought process to gardening and growing.

What story can we discern from the two photographs in Image 002?

- The man, woman, and child are likely family.

- They are participating in a gardening event as indicated by their matching t-shirts.
- The garden is located on a rooftop, which is a pretty telling detail. That's a story!

When telling a photo story of an event, think of it as a book, and each photograph that you create is a chapter in that book.

Every included photo should stand on its own with a ministory. However, all the images together as a group tell the full story.

**Key Point:**

*Every included photo should stand on its own with a ministory, but all the images together as a group tell the full story. The previous statement is the very core of event photography, whether it's a gardening event, a wedding, or a bar mitzvah.*

**Assignment:**

Attend a public event that includes family participation. If possible, choose a gardening and growing event. If that's not possible, then any event with family participation will work. Plan out your shots to tell a complete story of the event, with each photo having a ministory on its own. This exercise will show you how photo journalists work when telling a photo story. Also, select a delightful family and highlight them. Show the interaction between them (be sure to ask permission first). If one family member catches your eye, highlight them even further (think of the little girl in Image 002). Be sure to include storytelling details and background information for context (such as the rooftop location illustrated in Image 002).



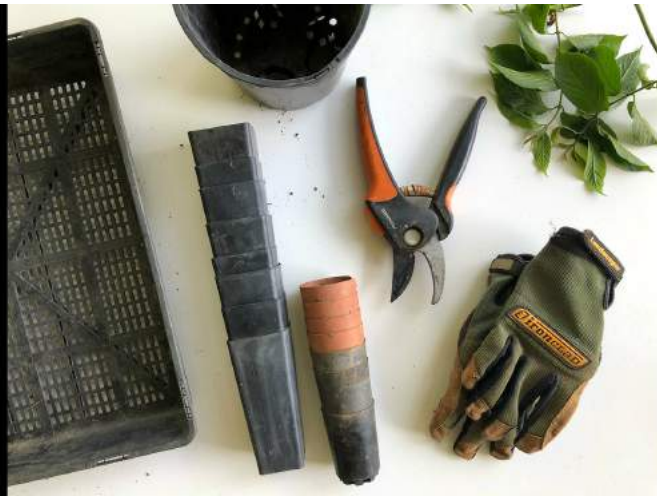


Image 003 – Photograph (L) by [Eiliv-Sonas Acheron](#) and Photograph (M) by [Eco Warrior Princess](#) and Photograph (R) by [Alexander Andrews](#)

Yet another photo storytelling technique is to set up a still life photo. Setting up a still life photo session can be a lot of fun. Why? You get to control every element of the story as it will appear in your photo versus the photojournalistic method of seeing and reacting to a given setting.

Image 003 displays three different styles of still life photography.

- 1 The far-left photo is a standard still life setup, which is usually shot at an angle.
- 2 The middle photo is called a flat lay photo. In the simplest terms, a flat lay is a photograph taken from directly above. Beneath, there's a flat surface that serves as the backdrop. Often, items are arranged in a vignette around the intended subject.
- 3 The far-right photo is a location still life.



### Assignment:

Create at least five storytelling still life photos of gardening or growing situations using each of the three described techniques: standard still life, flat lay, and location. This will give you a total of fifteen photos created. Choose your elements carefully so that a complete story is communicated to the viewer.



### Key Point:

Study the three photographs in Image 003. Which of the three has the weakest story? In my opinion, the far-right image has the weakest story. While it is pretty to view, it doesn't tell us much beyond the idea that this is a beautiful flower.



Image 004 – Photograph by [Michelle Henderson](#)

Image 004 is very similar to the far-right photograph in Image 003. However, the story is more substantial. Why?

We have been given a sense of the place where the moment happened.





Image 005 – Photograph (L) by [Mor Shani](#) and Photograph (R) by [Nandu Kumar](#)

Depending on your creative thought process, it may be essential to keep the story real, or perhaps not.

Would a woman practice her yoga meditation in the middle of a farm field? Probably not, but in the context of this photograph, perhaps it tells us a story about her as a person.

In reverse, would a woman that is clearly an agricultural worker be sitting around doing nothing? That's not likely either. It's a very different story.

When selecting a written book to read, you have the categories of fiction and non-fiction. The photo on the left of Image 005 would be found in the fiction section. The picture on the right of Image 005 would be in the non-fiction section.



### Assignment:

I am a magazine editor. I have given you the task of photographing a story on the theme of gardening and growing. I don't care what topics you pick as long as it fits within that theme. You can also choose whatever techniques you wish in order to tell the story of the subject. I want you to come back to me with 10 strong images. Five of them should fall into the fiction category and five into the non-fiction category. All 10 must work together to tell a complete story under the theme of gardening and growing.



Image 006 – Photograph (L) by [Markus Winkler](#) and Photograph (R) by [Markus Spiske](#)

When producing a body of work that tells a photo story, include detail pictures, as this is very important.

Detail pictures tend to create a stopping point within the story. It becomes a place where a viewer can rest and can enjoy a quiet moment while sorting out what they are being told.

A powerful storytelling technique is to combine similar detail photos into a diptych. This expands the story by having two separate thoughts viewed together.

Image 006 would be an excellent example of that.

*Have you heard of a diptych before?*

**Diptych:** A diptych was originally a pair of paintings or drawings that were often hinged together. In photography, a diptych is two

photos displayed (usually, although not always) within a single image frame. The two images are themed and are used to offset each other in the communication of a visual story.



#### Assignment:

Study some photographic diptychs online. Now spend a day photographing details on the theme of gardening and growing. Plan ahead for your diptychs. This means you want to create photos that are similar in nature, perhaps even comparable subjects, but each side tells a slightly different story. When combined, they tell a larger and more complete story as a diptych. Use Image 006 as your example and inspiration.