

FLOWER DROP TUTORIAL

Have you ever wanted to catch a little world in a water drop? Water droplet images are a great technique to use when shooting flowers. Water droplets can provide a focal point in an otherwise boring flower image. They can add an element of "wow" to your shots.

The first step in shooting using water droplets is to get your materials ready. You will need:

- a dropper of some kind (even a straw, with your finger held over the top to hold the water in until you want to drop it, will work);
- water (you can try a mix of 50% water and 50% glycerin to give the water droplets more staying power);
- a round container;
- some clips (I use laundry pegs);
- a towel;
- a flower of your choice;
- your camera and macro lens mounted on a tripod; and
- a plant stem of some kind (I like to choose one with some texture, as the water seems to "stick" better than on a smooth stem).



Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

A pansy caught in a water droplet.



Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

A geranium stem, shown in this image, had enough texture to help the water droplets “stick” to it.

Once you have your materials, you are ready to set up. The basic setup can be done indoors or outside. Use a table to set up your subject. Choose a spot with a nice background or use a ready-made background of your choice. You will be shooting with a narrow DOF so the background will become a nice soft blur.

I like to lay a towel down on the table where I will be setting up my stem and water droplets, especially if you are using glycerin. Glycerin can be quite sticky, which is great for your drops of water but not for your table.



Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

You may need to move the subject closer or farther away, or to the left or right, to get the flower's image refracted in the water droplets. Alternatively, you can move the camera up or down a bit.

Next, you want to create your stem setup between the camera and your subject, as shown in the image above. Use the container (in this case I used an empty flower pot) and the clips to hold your stem horizontally. Use your dropper to add water to the stem.

Once you have the flower, stem, and water droplets set up, you can adjust your camera setup. I get my macro lens close to the stem and water droplets (about 12 inches away). If you don't see the refracted image of your flower in the droplets, you can try a couple of things.

First, move the subject closer or farther away from the droplets, or to the left or right. I usually have the flower about five inches away, almost directly behind the water droplets. Another thing you can try is to move the camera up or down using the tripod. Even a very small change of height can be enough to catch the refracted image.



Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

A petunia and starbursts, from the sun being refracted in the water droplets, make for an interesting image.

Once you can see the refracted image of the flower in your water droplets, ensure that your f-stop is high enough to get the whole water droplet and the refracted image of the flower in focus. For this shot, my aperture was set to f/20.

You may need to adjust your shutter speed to get proper exposure, but don't worry if it is slow, as

you are using a tripod to avoid blur from camera shake.

Now you are ready to shoot. At this point I really like to take a few shots with the subject I have set up and then swap it out for a different flower.



Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

The final image, flipped upside down, shows three water droplets and their refracted images of the Black-Eyed Susan.

You can use the same basic setup to create water droplet flower images on the petals of other flowers or even the leaves. Your image will show

the flower upside down. If you wish, you can rotate the photo during editing so that the refracted flower image is the right way up.



Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

You can get some great abstract photographs, like this image, by placing a water droplet on a flower's petal and catching refracted parts of the flower in the droplet.



Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

This image shows another photo using the same setup with a different flower. The flowers in the water droplets are upside down. I like to rotate the final image so that the flower is the “right way up”; although, for some flowers it doesn’t really matter.



Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

Try placing water droplets on other surfaces, like the flower’s petals or leaves, to get flower images like the one shown in this image. The refracted image shows parts of this daylily’s petals and stamens.

Have fun and get creative using water droplets to catch some interesting flower images!