

## Case Study #03

# PHOTOGRAPHING FABULOUS FLOWERS

It is a big challenge to get all the elements in a photo working together all of the time. This image is a classic example of this. Some of the elements work quite well, while others are lacking. Let's look at what does and doesn't work in this image.

The photograph was taken inside, using natural light from a nearby window. The setup included the blue flower (known as Speedwell or Veronica) you see in the foreground and some yellow flowers used as a background color.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



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When I took this shot, the main idea was to try and capture these blue flowers against a contrasting background to really make them “pop.” Also, I thought these flowers had a very dainty, delicate look, and because of this I wanted the shot to have a soft, dreamlike appearance.

The yellow flowers offered good contrast and they were placed far enough away to create a nice out-of-focus background that wouldn’t compete for attention with the subject. The aperture, set at f/13, allowed for a shallow DOF and a suitably out-of-focus background.

When composing this shot, I tried to get the focus on the nearest stamens and pistil of the flower in the upper left, as shown in the second image. This flower was set against the yellow background in a

way that would really allow it to stand out. I also liked the diagonal line created by the stem from the upper-right to lower-left corner.

One of the things that is very difficult but important to do when you are shooting is not get so caught up in certain elements that you miss other things that are going on in the frame.

One of the things I did not consider in my composition of this shot was the placement of the flower that was to be my main subject. It is not placed on the intersecting lines of the RULE OF THIRDS. In and of itself this may not be a terrible thing, but in this image there is another flower that is in focus that sits on the “sweet spot,” and it competes for attention with the flower I intended to be the focus.

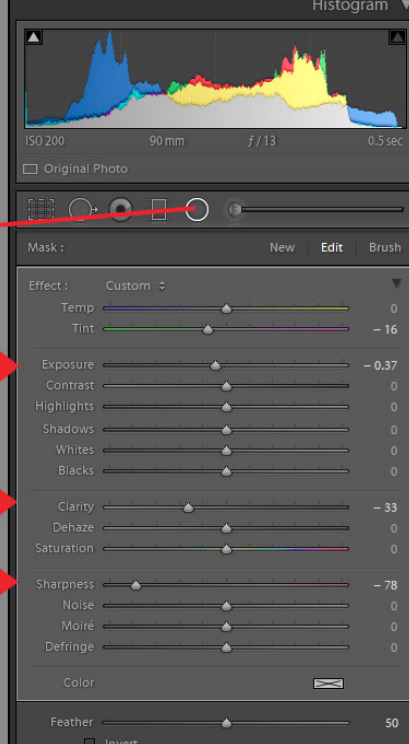




Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

If you look at the image above, you can see that the circled flower sits right on the intersecting lines created by the rule of thirds and the center of the flower is in focus. This flower is also quite brightly lit by backlight on the upper petals. Since brighter spots in an image tend to draw in the eye, this also helps detract attention away from my intended subject.

There are a few changes that could be made during the post-processing stage to improve this image and help draw the attention back to the intended focus point. The first change I made was to place the radial filter around my subject flower. I then proceeded to bring down the exposure, clarity, and sharpness of the rest of the image, while leaving my subject flower untouched.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

The next step was to crop the image in a way that placed my subject flower on the intersecting lines, while moving the other flower off that spot. The result is a slightly closer crop.

The last change I made in post-processing this image was to use the adjustment brush to subtly increase both the exposure and the sharpness of the subject flower. This resulted in the subject flower drawing more attention than the other flowers in the image.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

*This image shows the photo before and after post-processing. The subtle changes that were made help direct the viewer's attention to the subject flower while the other flowers become "supporting actors," creating context for the shot instead of competition.*

When a photograph has multiple elements that you are dealing with, remember not to get too caught up in one or two of those parts and lose sight of the "bigger picture." Try to train yourself to do a "visual sweep" of the whole image and look for things that might detract your viewer's eyes from the intended subject.

For those times when you miss something or forget to check, you may need to get creative with your editing. Get comfortable using your post-processing tools so that you will have them at your disposal when you really need them.