

## Case Study #05

# PHOTOGRAPHING FABULOUS FLOWERS



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Flowers offer an opportunity to photograph textures that few people get a chance to see and appreciate on a casual stroll through the garden. Several things play a role in capturing a flower's textures in a way to best showcase them. Let's look at the considerations you must make.

This photograph, of a Brown-Eyed Susan, was shot in a local garden. I was lucky enough to visit this garden several times over the summer and had ample opportunities to capture images of these beautiful flowers.

As I photographed the Brown-Eyed Susans I was struck by the thickness of their soft, hair-covered petals. I made it my goal to do their texture justice in an image. I had to take some things into consideration for this to happen.

First off, to capture the texture of the flower's features, I had to consider which lens I would use. To get close enough to see the details of the flower's sepals (the small green modified leaves underneath the flower bud) and the fine hairs on the stem and petals, I needed my macro lens.



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I didn't want my background competing for attention when I shot this flower. Because I was shooting in a garden that wasn't my own, "pruning" distractions out of the way wasn't an option. This flower was growing amongst many others like it, so I had to contend with the stems showing up in the background of my photo, as they do in this second image.

One of the great things about shooting with a macro is that your very narrow DOF helps you get a nice soft background. I didn't need a very large area cleared, so by using a laundry clip (like the one seen in the next photo) to hold back a couple of background stems (carefully, so as not to damage the plants), I was able to get a shot of the flower without any distractions. The remaining vegetation left a pleasing green background that complemented the flower nicely.





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Now, remember when I said I spent several days at this garden shooting? Well, only one of them produced results I was happy with, and that had to do with the light. Some of the days I went were quite sunny. They allowed adequate light for shooting the flowers but also created bright spots and made exposure inconsistent with harsh shadows, as in the second image.

The day I shot the original image, it was a bright, cloudy day. The cloud cover was high and thin, providing a nice even distribution of light over my subject. This even light eliminated the harsh shadows created by brighter light and helped me avoid blown-out spots in my photograph that can occur on a sunny day.

Using a hand-held light diffuser held over the subject could have produced similar results to

what was achieved with the clouds that day. But being able to spot those days when the weather is working in your favor is very helpful.

The other thing that worked in my favor that day was a lack of wind. Contending with wind when shooting outdoors can be a very challenging for photographers. Luckily, I had a still day to photograph the Brown-Eyed Susan.

With very minimal post-processing and a moderate crop (to make the image square and bring the details even closer), I was able to get a nice shot of a Brown-Eyed Susan bud about to unfurl. The use of a macro lens, alterations to make the background 'work,' and the patience to wait for the right day with regards to weather and light all played a role in getting a great texture shot.





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Often there are several pieces to the puzzle of getting a great image. Having the knowledge and

..... patience to make those work for you is important in becoming a better photographer.