

Case Study #06

PHOTOGRAPHING FABULOUS FLOWERS

Adding water to a flower photograph can create interest, and even add a focus point, to an otherwise ordinary image. Water-droplet photos are very popular on social media and photo contest sites as well. Mastering the use of water droplets in flower photos is well worth the time. Let's look at how a tiny drop of water can make a ho-hum photo pop.

This image was taken outdoors, using natural light. A tripod was set up and the use of a macro lens allowed the photographer to get a nice magnified view of the flower. The background consists of the leaves and stems of nearby flowers that were far enough away to be softened by the narrow DOF.

The photograph of a Brown-Eyed Susan is not without interest. The shape of the flower, set against a suitably soft background, is okay. There is some nice texture in the petals and the fine hairs of the sepals. The colors are true and the exposure is good, with no blown-out parts or underexposed areas.

The problem with this photo is that there isn't really a place to rest your eye. Nothing really grabs you and the composition lacks a real subject beyond "the flower." The eye flits around without any attention grabber. If anything were to grab your eye, it might be that bright bit of sky in the top left-hand corner.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



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The addition of a water droplet, as seen in this second image, instantly ups the ante of this plain-looking photo. The water was added using a medicine dropper to the drooping petal, which offered a convenient spot for the water to 'stick,' offering a nicely shaped droplet that allowed some refraction of the flowers and vegetation around it.

As shown in the Water Drop Tutorial, getting the refracted image *and* the drop in focus necessitates

a wider DOF. It was necessary to increase the f-stop and move a bit farther away to get the image in the drop clear. This had the unfortunate effect of making the background in this image less appealing than the original shot.

The change in focus also softened the petals closest to the camera. This isn't entirely a bad thing, though, as we don't really want the petals competing with our new subject: the water droplet.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

A closer crop did two things for the final image. First, it cropped out the lighter, distracting parts behind the left of the flower, leaving a nice green blurry background. The second thing this crop did was place the water droplet nearly on the intersection of lines for the RULE OF THIRDS, placing greater emphasis on it as the subject. You can see the results in this third image.

The resulting photograph is quite different from the first attempt. What this photo has that the

original didn't, is a point of focus that the viewer can quickly identify. The water droplet provides a place for their eye to rest after traveling around the frame. And the refracted image in the water droplet holds enough mystery to make it an interesting subject.

Try adding water next time your flower image lacks punch and see if you can kick it up a notch.