

## Case Study #09

# PHOTOGRAPHING FABULOUS FLOWERS

A change in perspective is one of a photographer's more powerful tools. It can offer a new and unique view. It can make the ordinary seem extraordinary. It can create a mystery or a surprise.

The image below is an uncharacteristic view of a very commonly photographed subject for flower photographers. Because of its different perspective, it makes the viewer think. We give our viewers a lot of credit when we present images like this. We basically tell them they are "up for the challenge."

The photo was shot at ISO 400 at an f-stop of 16 and a shutter speed of 1/250<sup>th</sup> of a second. The higher ISO was necessary for me to shoot hand-

held, as my tripod didn't have the reach for this shot. I needed the DOF to be wide enough to capture enough of the carpels in focus to establish the pattern. The shutter speed was do-able for holding and shooting.

I have probably shot hundreds of sunflower images so far and I anticipate them being my subject again. There is nothing wrong with more traditional photographs of flowers, like the image on the next page, but if you really want your image to make an impact, then a change in perspective is a great approach. I enjoy finding new and interesting ways to shoot a common or popular subject. It is part of the fun of photography for me.



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

The day I shot the first image, I was on the lookout for something new. When staring at a flower there are certain elements that stand out: the petals, the stamens, the stem, the leaves, the tiny hair-like structures. Sunflowers offer lots of interesting features on a larger scale than many flowers.

The leaf-like structures in the middle of my sunflower are called carpels and may eventually develop into flowers and then seeds, if things develop as they should. These structures are

organized in an organic pattern that was hard to resist. When I first shot the image, I didn't even notice the tiny drops of water captured between the carpels.

After taking a test shot and noticing the droplets, I recomposed my photo to ensure that the droplets were in the sharp region of my focus. I like the interest they add to the image. They also added a short "break" in the pattern created by the carpels, making the viewer pause there for a moment.

I treated this photo a bit like I would a landscape shot. I was thinking in thirds and wanted to get the nearest third in focus with the farthest two-thirds showing how the pattern continues. The bright petals in the upper part of the photo draw the viewer's eyes through to the top of the frame and offer a hint of what this image really is.

Macro shots can offer a lot of mystery, and this image is no exception. At a glance, many people might not know what they are looking at. It takes a closer inspection of the photograph to register that what you are viewing is a plant, and a bit longer to guess the plant's identification.

Once the viewer has established that they are looking at a sunflower they can take a moment to marvel at the details that a magnified view allows them to see. The small droplets of water, the fine hairs, and the precise arrangement of the carpels can be appreciated with this unique perspective.

Whether you are honing in on a specific feature, shooting your subject from behind or from a new angle, a change in perspective can be just the thing you need to get a really great and unique shot of your flower.