

PHOTOGRAPHING FABULOUS FLOWERS

Premium Guide
Written by Leanne Cleaveley



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
01 What You Need to Creatively Photograph Flowers	9
02 Camera Settings	22
03 Natural Light	39
04 Artificial Light: When and Why You Should Use It.	49
05 Composition	61
06 Getting Creative: How to Visualize and Create a Great Shot	82
07 Setups and Props.	105
08 Editing and Printing Your Photos	140
Conclusion	151

INTRODUCTION



Image 001 – Cover Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Flowers are a wonderful photographic subject for photographers.

You can find them growing in a garden, in bunches at the grocery store, and in pots at plant stores.

Because they come in a wide variety of shapes, colors, textures, and sizes, they offer a variety of opportunities for shooting fabulous pictures.

Flowers can be shot during all seasons of the year, indoors and outdoors. From Christmas cactus and poinsettia in the heart of winter, to crocuses in the spring, dahlia and roses in the summer, and autumn chrysanthemums, you can find a flower no matter what time of the year it is.

For the same reasons that flowers are so wonderfully accessible, flower photographs are also very easy to find online or in photo forums.

They are about as common as sunset images.



Image 002 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Many photo-sharing groups shun flower photography, with guidelines such as “macro nature photographs (no flowers, please).” I know some photographers who will not shoot flowers because they are ‘too common’ of a subject, or they consider it a subject that has been so overdone.

When something is so common (photographically), you really need to stretch yourself as a photographer to make your images stand out.

Instead of thinking, “There are thousands of shots of daisies. Why should I even bother?” I like to think, “How can I get a daisy shot that is truly unique and interesting?”

But thinking that, and then actually doing that, are two very different things.

It wasn’t until about four years ago – when I borrowed a friend’s macro lens – that I really started to “see” flowers in a way that allowed me to capture some unique and interesting shots. At that time, I had hundreds of shots that looked like the thousands of others taken by photographers around the world.

So, how do you go from a shot like this...



Image 003 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

To a shot like this?



Image 004 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

A wise person said that “practice is the best of all instructors,” and it is crucial advice for photographers that want to get amazing shots.

I would hazard a guess that about 1 in 100 of my early flower photographs were interesting enough to keep. I literally ‘weeded’ hundreds of shots after a round of photography.

Nowadays, I create, and prune, considerably fewer photographs than I used to.

I can get quality shots, ones that I feel are worth keeping, without the quantity.

That is mostly due to the things I have learned through practice.

I can save you some of those awkward steps that I had to go through to get to a point where my flower photography became ‘keepers’ instead of ‘losers.’

I’ll do this by sharing some of the things that I have learned along the way.

Beyond practicing and honing your photographer’s eye, there are some other important things that you can do to improve your flower photography right now.

By walking you through what equipment you will need, some compositional tools, how to effectively use depth of field, how to visualize your shot, what lighting works best, and how to edit to make the most of your images, I will show you how to get consistently great flower photographs that are truly distinct.

I will also teach you some creative ‘tricks’ that photographers use to make their flower photos stand out from the rest. We’ll look at things like the use of water drops, infusing bokeh, high and low-key effects, intentional camera movement (ICM), and the use of props to make your flower shots outstanding in the eyes of your viewers.

I will also walk you, step by step, through some of my shots, so that you can see how they were set up. I will explain how I visualized that shot and what considerations went into the shot to best use light including which settings I chose and why.

By the end of this guide, you will have learned the skills and techniques to take your flower photography from common and ordinary, to extraordinary and unique!

After reading this guide you will be able to do the following:

- Prepare a kit with the equipment that you will need for photographing flowers
- Understand and apply composition tools that will help you catch great shots of flowers
- Effectively utilize depth of field to get the most out of your flower photos
- Visualize a shot and then carry out the necessary steps to capture that image
- Utilize both natural light and artificial light when shooting flowers
- Carry out basic editing steps to really *finish off* your flower photographs

Also, special attention will be given to the use of some of the tricks that great flower photographers utilize when capturing truly creative shots: water drops, bokeh, high/low key, props, and more.

01

**WHAT YOU NEED TO CREATIVELY
PHOTOGRAPH FLOWERS**

Having the right equipment is important in any type of photography. There are some basic supplies that you will need to shoot flowers, and also some optional ones that I find VERY useful.

BASIC KIT

YOUR CAMERA

First of all, you need a camera that allows you to control your aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. It is important to get comfortable working in manual mode and also using these three settings regularly.

You need to have control over the elements of the photo that you're creating.

I have seen some amazing shots of flowers taken with a smartphone or mirrorless compact camera.

These cameras are small, lightweight, and convenient. Many compact models also offer a variety of lens choices and a wide range of control options over the settings that I previously mentioned above.

DSLR cameras are larger, and heavier, than their mirrorless counterparts, but they offer a wider range of lenses, optical viewfinders, and a somewhat longer battery life.

The feature that continues to set DSLR cameras ahead of *most* compact cameras is the sensor size. With their larger sensors, DSLR cameras can produce better quality images, especially in low-light situations.

Another advantage of a full-frame sensor camera is how "blurry," or smooth, your background can appear. The larger the camera sensor is, the softer your background (with focal length and aperture being the same) will be (with the full frame offering the softest background).

For flower photographers, this is an important consideration, as backgrounds can sometimes "make or break" a flower shot.

Ultimately, you will have to weigh the pros and cons of mirrorless compact vs. DSLR cameras, and if you are lucky enough to own both, you may just need to assess each shooting situation to decide which camera will serve you best.

If you're going for a bike ride and contemplating taking some wildflower photos, the lightweight compact camera might be your best choice.

However, if you're taking photographs of flowers in your backyard, it will be easy to take your DSLR camera with you.

Another important option to consider when choosing your camera is whether or not it has live view and tethering capabilities.

Live view allows you to view the image on your LCD or electronic screen while composing the shot. Some cameras offer the ability to view the same scene on your computer screen using a cable or with wireless capabilities. This is known as tethering.

The Live View and tethering features can offer a huge advantage to macro photographers as they can see, very quickly, which parts of the image are in focus and adjust their focus accordingly.

Obviously, tethering your camera to view the image on your laptop screen requires you to pack more equipment. This particular feature wouldn't be as useful for "in the field" shots, as it wouldn't be practical to pack your laptop with you. However, when setting up a shot indoors, it can give a photographer more control over the image as it is produced.

Another nice option for your camera that can help you work with flowers at ground level is an articulating screen or a right-angle viewfinder. These two features can help save you from lying on the ground or hunching over to look at the image in your viewfinder. Otherwise, you may want to invest in a mat or some waterproof clothing to make you more comfortable while working low to the ground.



Image 005 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

If you plan on shooting flowers "in the field," be sure to take a mat to keep yourself from getting dirty or wet. Alternatively, you can look for a camera with an articulated screen or a right-angle viewfinder.

THE LENS

There are several types of lenses that I use to photograph flowers. My personal favorite is a macro lens, but a telephoto lens can also work for creating wonderfully blurred backgrounds, and I have used a wide-angle lens for certain effects as well.

Macro Lenses

This is by far my first choice when it comes to flower photography.

Macro lenses come in a range of focal lengths, from 15mm to 200mm. The longer your focal length, the farther away from your subject you can be, while still achieving that 1:1 magnification.

Conversely, the shorter the focal length, the closer the camera must be to your subject to achieve 1:1 magnification.

So, what is the best focal length for flower photography? Since you probably don't want your nose in the flowers that you are photographing (or maybe you do!), a very short focal length is best avoided. However, the longer focal lengths can make it difficult to shoot while hand-holding the camera. A nice mid-range focal length works best when starting out.

Light is an important consideration for macro photographers. Because macro lenses will have you working close to your subject, you need to consider how that affects the available light and whether you might be putting your subject into your shadow. This is yet another reason why a macro option on a shorter focal length lens can be very challenging.

A little longer focal length lens puts the photographer at a more comfortable working range, which can help with the lighting issue that I just mentioned, while still achieving that 1:1 magnification.

Just remember that the longer the lens, the heavier it will be.

Unless you are also doing a lot of insect photography – where the subjects tend to startle easily and the camera being farther away from the subject could be advantageous – I recommend something in between the two extremes of focal length.

Ultimately, if you want a lens that gives you the versatility to hand-hold the camera when you want to, has a long enough focal length that you won't be blocking the available light, and also allows you to photograph at a comfortable distance, then aim for something in the range of 60-100mm.

The macro lens that I use is a 90mm lens, which puts me at a comfortable minimum focus distance of about 12 inches.

 **Key Lesson:** The best macro lens for shooting flowers should be light enough to hand-hold and of a focal length that you would rarely block the available light. A lens in the 60-100mm range will put you at a comfortable working distance without being too heavy and cumbersome.

Telephoto or Zoom Lens

You can also use a telephoto lens for close-up flower photography.

A telephoto lens will not give you that 1:1 magnification of macro lenses; however, it can achieve some nice results.

I have had some positive experiences shooting with my 55-200mm zoom at its longest focal length while using a wide-open aperture.

The drawback to a telephoto lens is that camera shake can be a real issue, and you must work quite a distance (about a meter or more) from your subject. A tripod is essential for this type of lens in flower photography!

Wide-Angle Lens

Although a less conventional choice for flower photography, a wide-angle lens can be used for great effect when shooting flower photos as well.

The wide-angle macro's ability to let the photographer get very close to their subject while shooting at a wide aperture can be very helpful. They also allow you to hand-hold and shoot with ease.

This is a great lens for isolating a single flower in a field of flowers and having them stretch away endlessly. They can also be fun for creating a "lengthening" effect when shooting the flower from above or below (making them look much taller).

I have seen extraordinary shots of flowers taken with wide angles of varying focal lengths. Just be sure that the wide angle you are using has a minimum focus distance of under 12 inches, so that you can get close enough to your subject.

Lens manufacturers will have this information available, and it is worth checking if you plan to purchase a wide-angle lens for this type of photography.

Full-Frame Sensors, Cropped Sensors, and Lens Choice

One more thing that I should mention when talking about lenses is the difference between full-frame and small (or cropped) sensors. What type of sensor your camera has will affect the image produced by your lenses.

Keep in mind that if you have a full-frame sensor in your camera, a 50mm lens will have an equivalent focal length of 50mm. However, if you have a cropped sensor camera (APS-C), then that 50mm lens will have an *equivalent* focal length of 75-80mm depending on your camera brand. In essence, you are cropping the outside edges of your photo, but you won't really know this... unless you compare the same lens on two different cameras (a full-frame vs. an APS-C) to really see the difference.

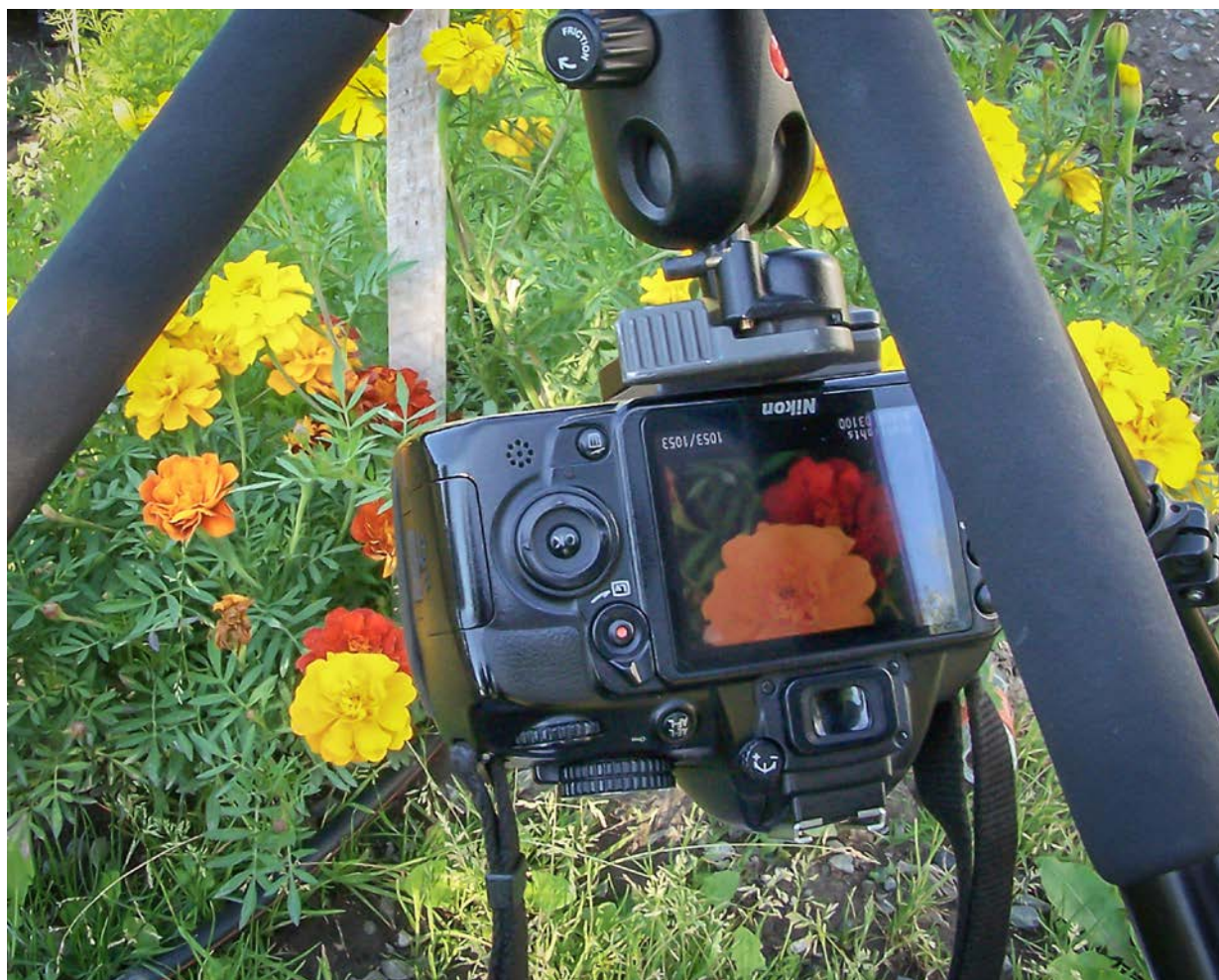


Image 006 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

When choosing a tripod, look for features such as a reversible center column like the one here. It makes it easier to get close to your subject while keeping your camera steady.

Key Lesson: When it comes to lenses, I recommend you use and get very comfortable with yours. It is important to have that lens become an extension of yourself and your vision for the images that you want to create.

Tripod

You will need a good sturdy tripod. I have gone the cheap, wobbly tripod route before; believe me, a good tripod is worth the investment. You want a camera support that won't tip or wobble in the wind.

Look for tripod features that will get you comfortably close to your subject.

A ball head is nice for making quick, small adjustments to the angle of your photo when shooting flowers.

The ability to reverse the center column of your tripod and place it upside down is also a nice feature for getting closer to the flowers that you are shooting.

Weight

I also add a weight to my kit. This is to attach to the feet of your tripod and can be particularly useful if you are trying to lean out over the top of a flower.

You can buy sandbags for this purpose or find something that you already have around the house.

I have repurposed an old ankle weight, and it has become a regular part of my photography kit (as I would much rather take photos than work out anyway!).

Flash

Another accessory that you should include in your flower photography gear is an external flash. It is critical for shooting inside at night, in low-light situations, and to create fill lighting when shooting outdoors in bright sunshine.

Your in-camera flash can be helpful for creating fill-light in some situations, although it typically won't work when shooting **very** close to your subject with a macro lens unless you use an off-camera option. The reason is that you are working very close to your subject, and your lens will often block the in-camera flash, thus casting a shadow onto your subject.

When using an external flash, consider how to mount it away from the camera. A light stand, or a flash bracket (both readily available and inexpensive) can get your flash into a better position for lighting your subject.

Alternatively, you could use a second tripod (remember that old wobbly one you just replaced?) for this purpose.

Ideally you would want a wireless option for triggering your flash, especially when shooting outdoors where having wires

running to your flash can be a nuisance. If you are not extending your flash too far off camera, an off-camera flash adapter cord can work well when starting out.

Power

I recommend you pack an extra set of batteries, as there is nothing worse than having your flash run out of juice just when you've achieved the perfect setup.

For the same reason, you should also have a fully charged second battery for your camera at your disposal.

I guarantee you that the moment you get your setup just right is the moment your batteries will die. Back-up batteries are an inexpensive way to prevent mishaps and frustration.

Reflector

A reflector of some kind is important when shooting flowers.

It doesn't have to be too large, as your subject is small.

There are many nice, small, collapsible, commercial reflectors out there. They are affordable and easy to tuck into your camera bag.

I often use a piece of white poster board, which I keep nearby, to bounce a bit of light onto my subject. It's a cheap, easy-to-use reflector, which can be quickly replaced if lost or destroyed.

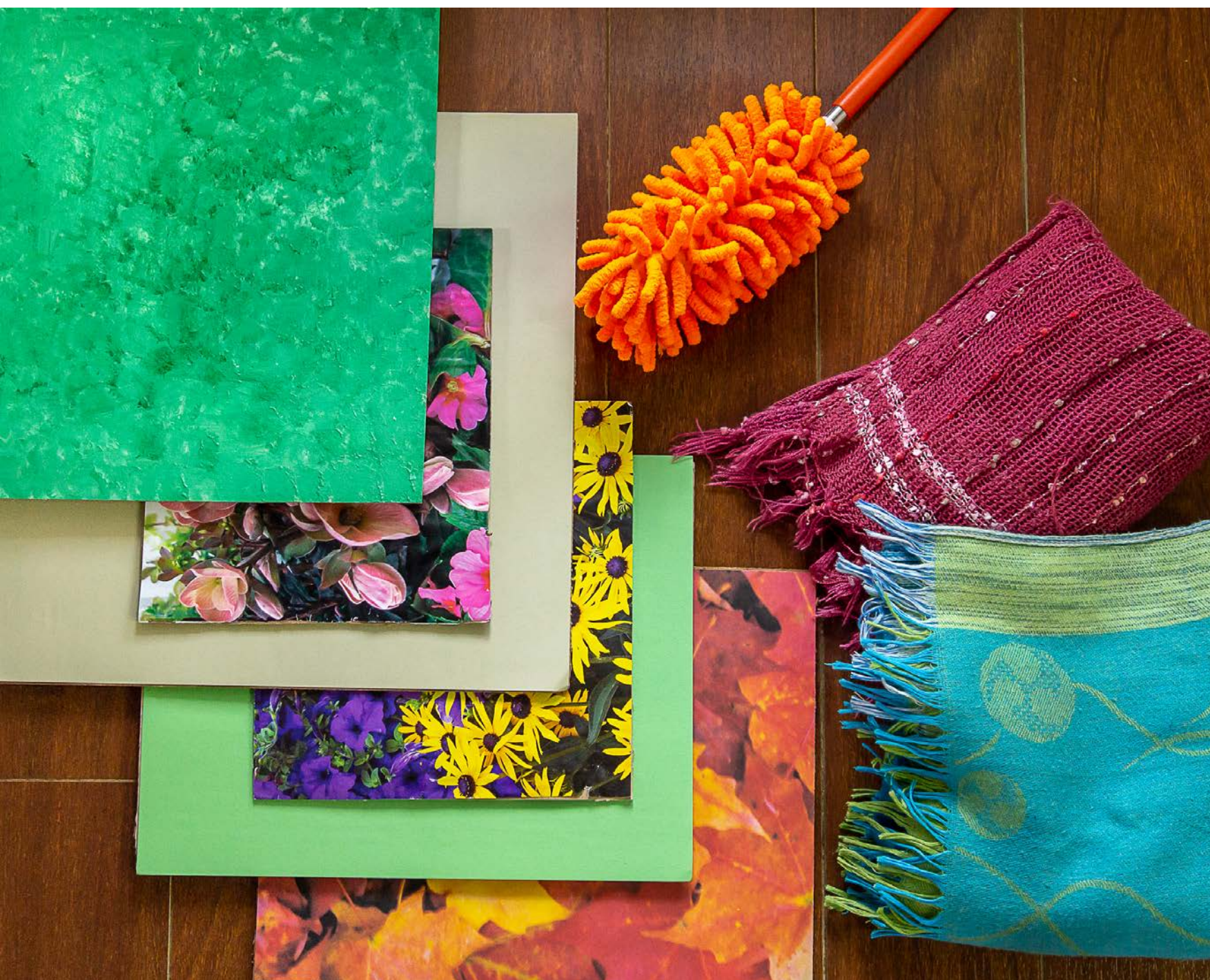


Image 007 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

In a pinch, I have pulled seat cushions off chairs, used a mop head, and laid my jacket down as backgrounds. If you don't feel like packing a whole bunch of items, then plan to get creative and use the things you find around you.

IMPORTANT EXTRAS

BACKGROUNDS

Some optional, but very helpful items that I keep with my gear for flower shots are some background materials. These can be some carefully chosen material (look for patterns that work well in nature) and even magazine page cutouts.

One of my go-to backgrounds came from a gardening magazine. I simply cut out the page and mounted it on poster board.



If the background is busy or unflattering, I pull out my homemade background and use that.

Image 008 - Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



Image 009 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

The orange duster made for a great background when shooting cornflowers.

💎 **Key Lesson:** I was looking for a nice background to accent the petals on this cornflower in Image 008. Usually I look for contrasting colors, but I had an orange duster nearby that I thought might give an interesting “pop” of color.

Because the background is a nice soft blur due to a very shallow depth of field, you don’t actually see the duster, just the color. Next time you are shooting, do a quick scan around you for potential backgrounds that might help highlight your subject.



Image 010 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

GARDENING TOOLS

Scissors are a great tool for flower photographers as they allow you to do some “pruning” of distracting objects. I keep a small pair handy for clipping out brown leaves or snipping a rogue stem.

Clips

A clip of some kind can serve to position your flowers; for example, clipping them to something so they stand upright. You can also use a clip to hold some flowers out of the way of your shot. I use a couple of laundry clips for this purpose and always keep them in my camera bag.

OTHER EXTRAS AND STORAGE

Other items that I will talk about later include props such as vases, teacups, a nice piece of wood, or a watering can. I find a water spray bottle or medicine dropper very useful for adding water to a shot.

As you shoot more and more flowers, you may find your kit growing to meet your needs. I keep a tote for the items I like to use for flower photography (and others for other types of photography) that I can pull out as needed. I have a few of these for different types of photography, and as I find things that might be helpful, I add them to the tote.

Quick Summary of Equipment You Will Need

The Basics

- Camera with manual mode
- A good lens – preferably a macro
- Tripod – a good sturdy one
- Weight – to help secure the tripod
- External flash and support
- Reflector(s)
- Spare batteries for both your flash and your camera

Important Extras

- A right-angle viewfinder or articulated LCD on your camera
- Comfortable clothes or a mat for working near ground level
- Background materials
- Scissors
- Clips
- Props like vases and cups
- Spray bottle and/or medicine dropper
- Something to store your gear in

Self-Check Quiz:

1. What are three helpful features to look for in a camera that you will use for flower photography?
2. What is a good focal length range for a macro lens for flower photography?
3. A _____ that won't tip or wobble is a must for flower photography.
4. A _____ and a _____ can help you shed some extra light onto your subject.
5. What are two tools that can get your flash in a better position for close-up shots?
6. Give one advantage of full-frame sensors over cropped sensors.
7. True or False: A wide-angle lens is a poor choice for flower photography because you can't get close enough to your subject.
8. The longer your lens is, the _____ it will be and this will make hand-held shots more challenging.

 **Non-Shooting Assignment:** Put together a kit of equipment that you will use for flower photography. Be sure to include the basics and some items that you can use for backgrounds, some clips, scissors, and any props that you think might be helpful.

Find a place to store your gear where it will be handy for your next shoot.

02

CAMERA SETTINGS

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, one piece of equipment you can't do without for shooting flowers is a camera with manual settings. And one of the things you must do is get comfortable using those settings to get the shots that you want.

You need to have some knowledge of what those knobs and dials on your camera do before you can head out and shoot. That brings us to how to make the most of your camera settings to get the shots that you want.

So, where do you start?

Well, as with most things, that depends on what your goal is. But there are some basic steps that one should go through every time you set up for a shoot.

I recommend that if you don't already shoot in the camera RAW format you change that in your camera settings menu. Shooting in RAW allows you to change and adjust a range of settings in post-production that you just can't do with a JPEG.

Keep in mind that the file size will be larger when shooting RAW, so make sure that you have plenty of space on your memory card.

The first thing that I do when setting up my camera is to adjust my ISO and white balance.

Since you will be photographing a subject that stays fairly still, you are safe to start out with an ISO setting of 100 or 200.

Exceptions to that would be low-light situations, or when windy conditions make your flowers dance around.

But for now, let's assume that there is no wind present and the light is good.



Image 011 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Do a quick check of your white balance and be sure to adjust for the *quality* of light. When dealing with man-made light, it is sometimes difficult to know what you are dealing with.

You can do a quick test shot using your fluorescent and incandescent white balance settings and see which one looks right.

Don't sweat this too much, though, because if you are shooting in RAW, as I recommended above, white balance adjustments can be made in post-processing that will fix any errors made when shooting.

Still, it's best to get it accurately set if possible.

As you will be using a tripod, shutter speed isn't as much of a concern, because your camera will be mounted and there will be little chance of camera shake.

The next thing I look at is the aperture. There are a few factors that you need to consider when setting the aperture for a particular shot.

HOW MUCH DEPTH OF FIELD?

You should ask yourself whether you want a wide or narrow depth of field (DOF) in your shot.

Are you trying to get everything within the shot in sharp focus? If so, you will want a wider depth of field (DOF), and you will use a higher f-stop number (that is a smaller aperture).

If you are trying to get only a small slice of your image in sharp focus, with a nice blurry out-of-focus background and foreground, then you will want to use a lower f-stop number (wider aperture).

You'll notice that I didn't give you any f-stop values in the above statement.

That is because the type of lens that you will use, and the distance from your camera to the subject, will play a role in which f-stop you should choose.

If you are using a macro lens, you will find that you are most likely to *only* have a very narrow DOF, no matter which f-stop you use. This has to do with the lens' magnifying ability along with your proximity to the subject. Other than taking multiple shots at different focus points and then focus-stacking them in post-production, you are left with very little "wiggle room" with a macro lens.

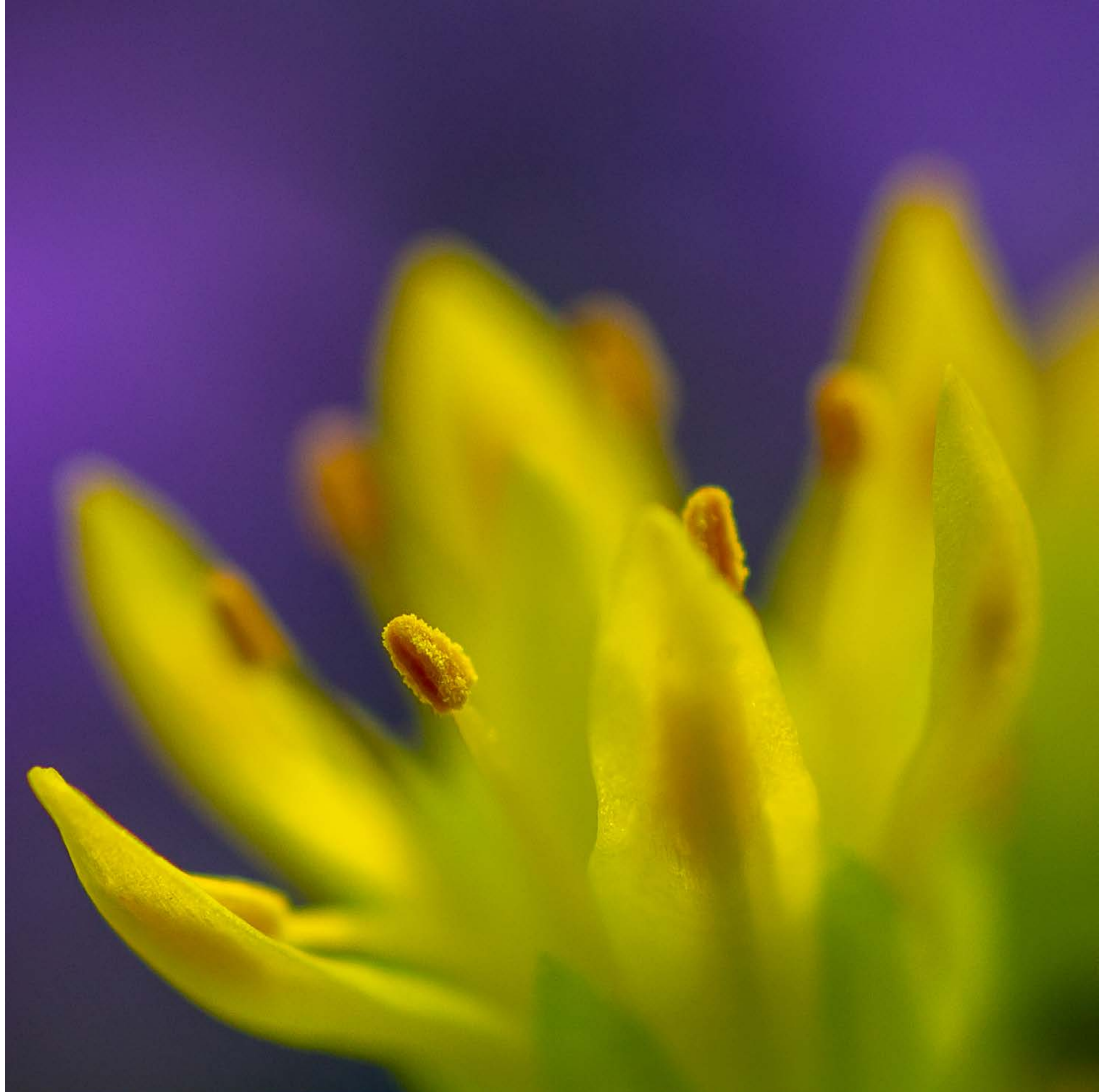
Personally, I love the shallow DOF that I can achieve with using a macro lens, and most of my flower shots are taken with one.

The wonderful, soft bokeh effect is one plus. I also enjoy leading the viewer's eyes into the part of the flower that I choose to have in sharp focus.

With such a narrow DOF, you can have elements in the foreground and background that become a soft blur that gives your photo a surreal or dreamy feeling.

Image 012 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

If you are using a telephoto lens, set up your camera further away from your subject. This provides more latitude in the DOF setting by using a higher or lower f-stop. This can have a significant effect on your background and your ability to isolate your subject from other plants within the background.



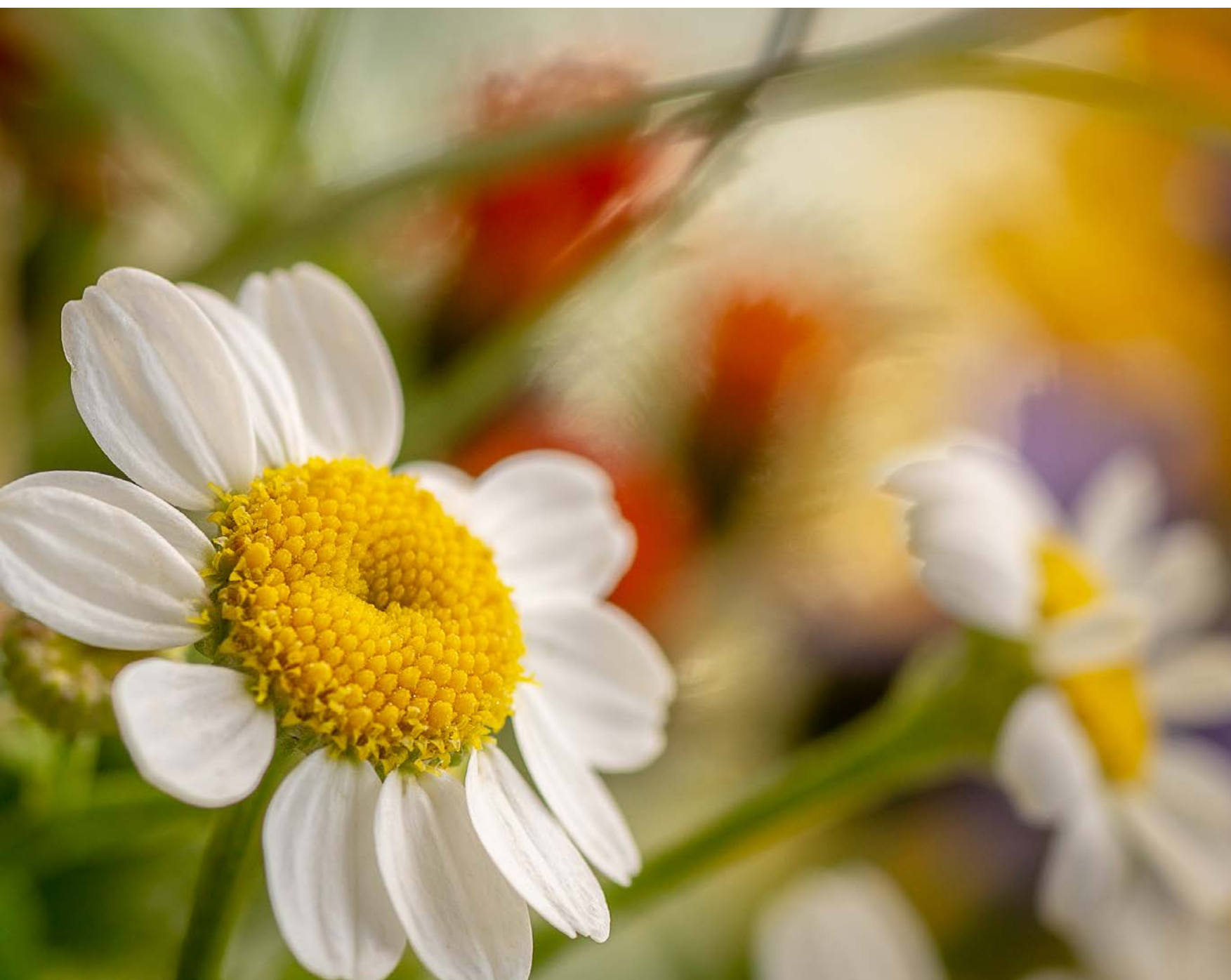


Image 013 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

A telephoto lens can be used, with a wider aperture, to create background blur effects through depth of field.

There are some great websites that can calculate DOF based upon your type of lens, the distance from the subject to the camera, and the chosen aperture.

These websites are helpful when you are starting out as a guide for setting up your shot.

Over time you will develop a “feel” for what will work and what won’t.

I recommend taking multiple shots of the same flower at different apertures (and camera-to-subject distances) to see what different depth of field settings can reveal in the final picture.

Here is an example of some shots that I took with my macro lens of the same flowers at the same distance using different apertures:



Image 014 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley
Taken at f/7.1



Image 015 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley
Taken at f/9

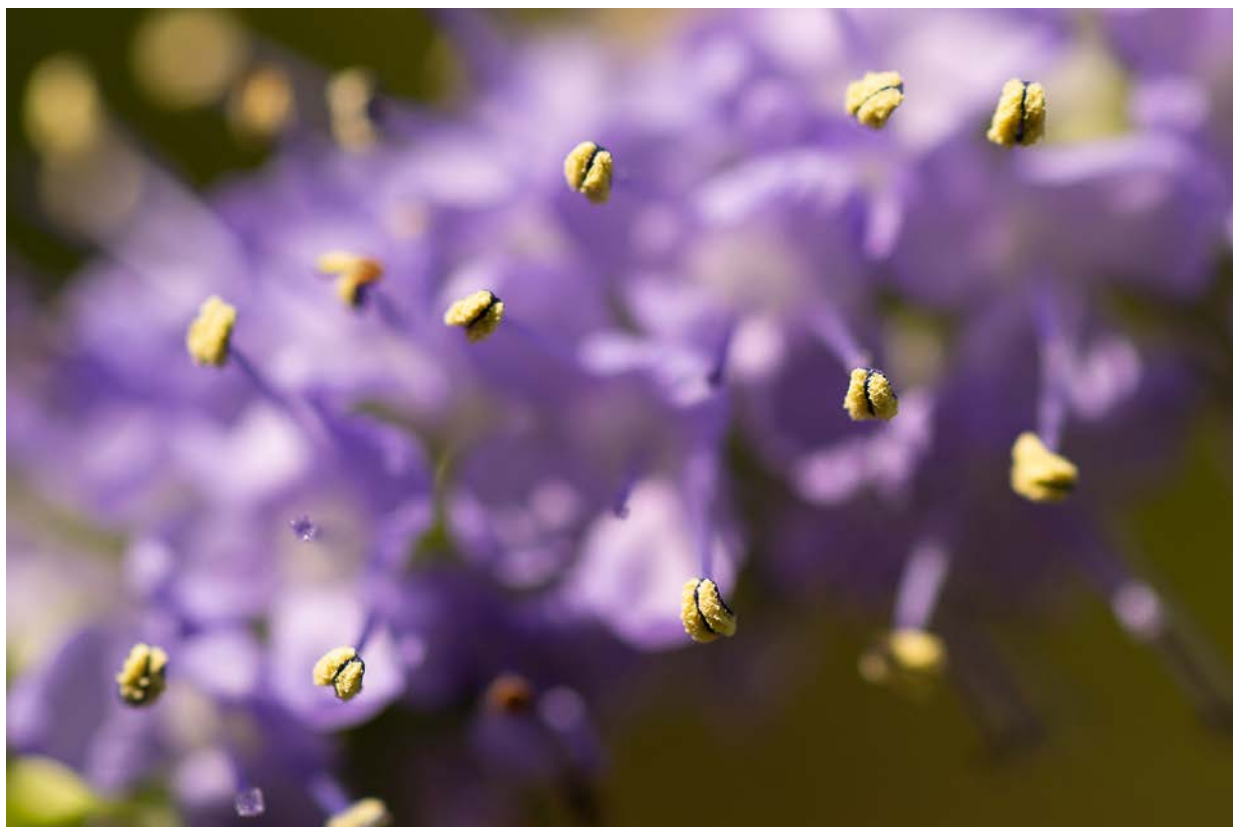


Image 016 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley
Taken at f/11

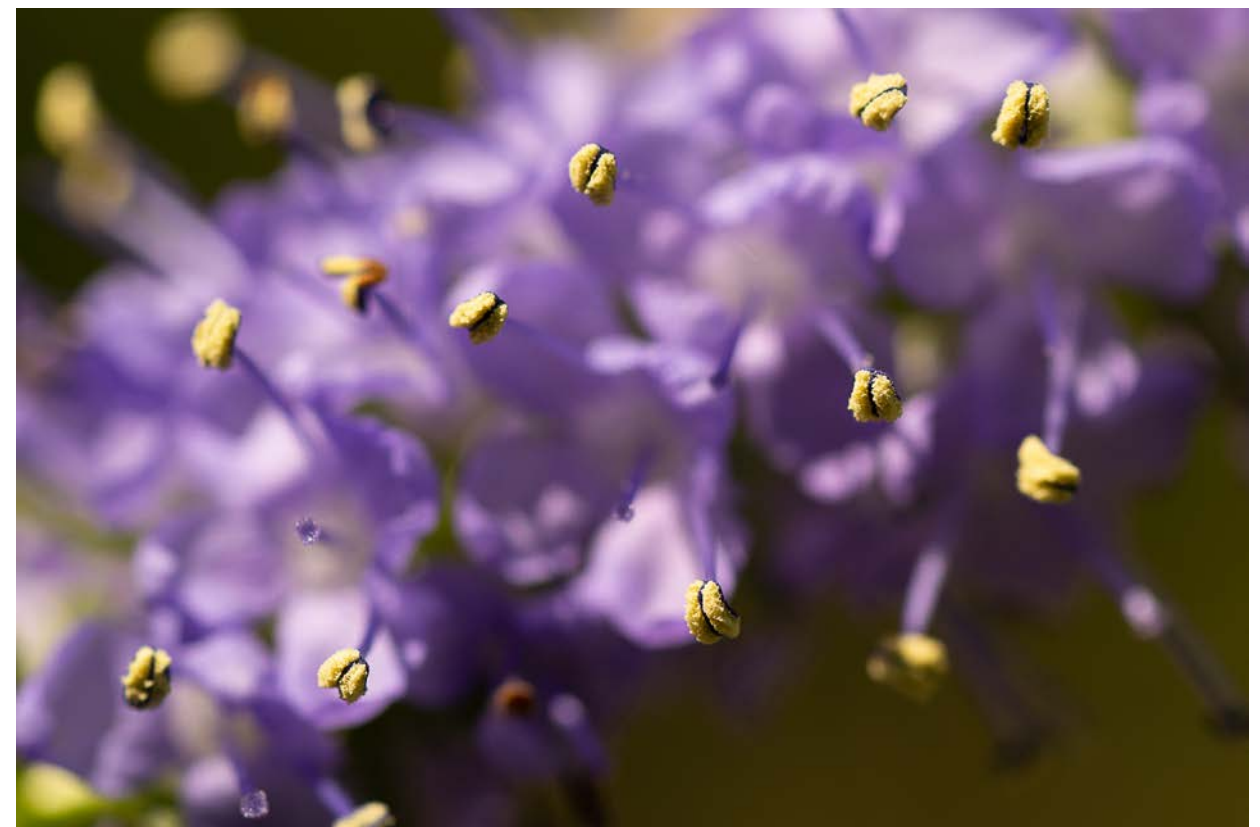


Image 017 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley
Taken at f/14

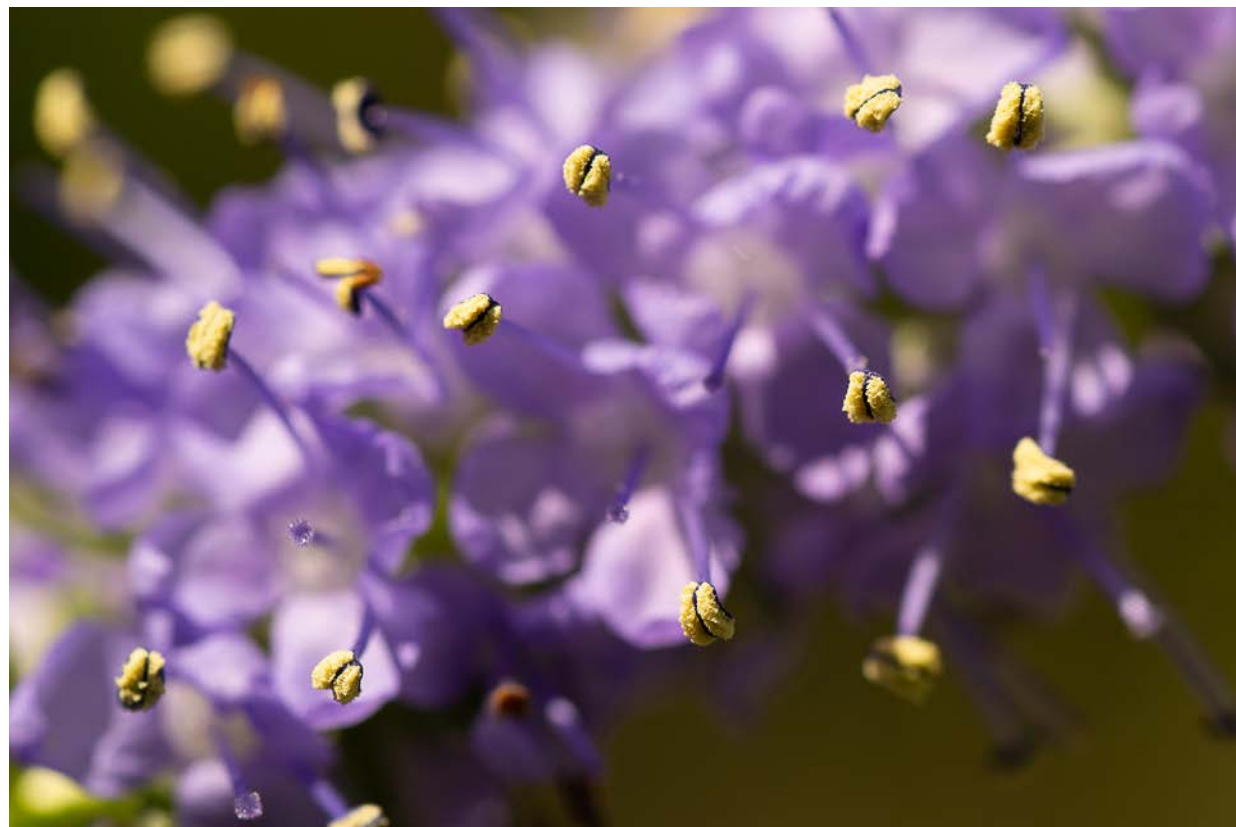


Image 018 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley
Taken at f/18



Image 019 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley
Taken at f/22

Note how as the aperture decreases (higher f-stop), more of the flowers' stamens are revealed and you start to see the shape of the flowers.

Also, look at how the quality of the bokeh changes. Some of the background stamens started out as soft yellow balls. As the DOF increases, you start to see them for what they really are. In some of the later photos, with maximum DOF, they become downright distracting.

It is important to take the time to try out different apertures and see how the DOF affects your subject, as well as both the background and foreground elements.

Make a practice of taking a few test shots at different apertures to see how it affects your composition. You may even discover something that you didn't notice before.

 **Shooting Assignment:** Take several shots of the same flower at different apertures to see how higher and lower f-stops affect your image. A higher f-stop can reveal more of the flower's features or details. A lower f-stop can create interesting blur or bokeh that directs the viewer's eyes toward parts of the image that you want them to notice.

DISTANCE AND PLANE OF FOCUS

How does your distance from the subject affect your DOF? The closer you get to your subject, the narrower the DOF. Conversely, the farther you get away from your subject, the wider the DOF.

So, part of your decision-making will be around how *large* you want your subject to be in the photograph, and how *much* of it will be in sharp focus.

Another factor when shooting, especially when you have a narrow DOF, is your plane of focus.

To understand the plane of focus, you first must imagine a line passing straight through your camera. This imaginary line is called the optical axis. Your plane of focus is another imaginary line that intersects the first line at 90 degrees. If the camera is tilted, the plane of focus is tilted too.

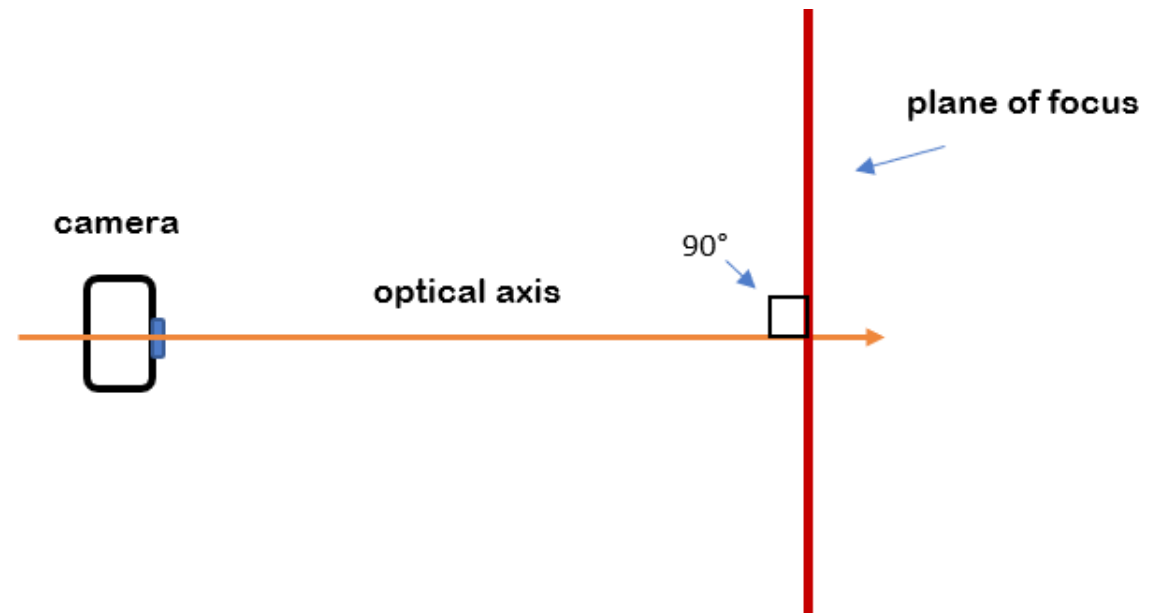


Image 020

If you are shooting your subject straight on, your focus point is true, and your flower is *completely flat*, then the whole flower will be in perfect focus.

But thankfully, flowers are not two-dimensional and there will often be times that shooting your subject on an angle will create a better image.

Consider how the plane of focus affects the following two images.

The camera's aperture was set at f/9 for both examples, and both photos were taken at roughly the same distance from the subject.



Image 021 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

In this image I used the center of the flower as my focus point. Most of the flower is in focus, except for the bottom petals. They are only farther away by mere millimeters, and yet the focus on them is soft.

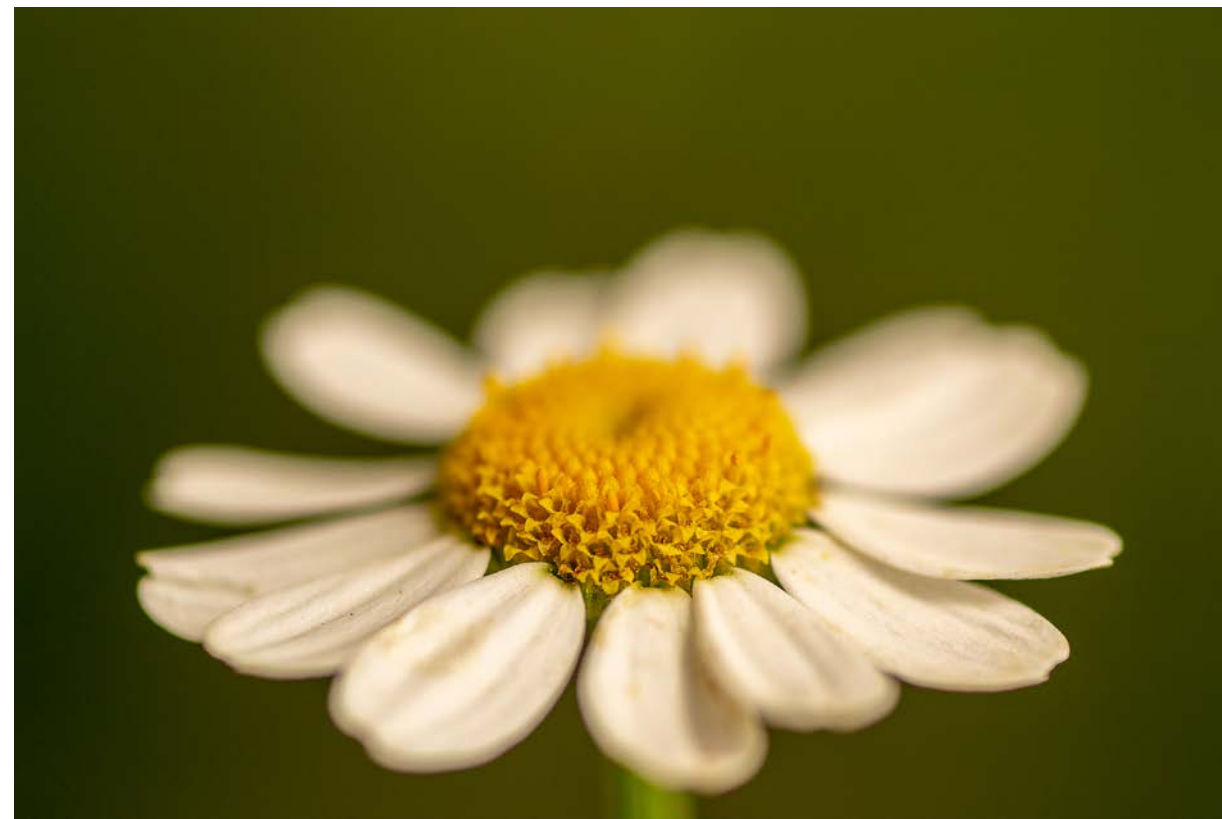


Image 022 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Shot at an angle, with my focus point being where the petals and the middle of the flower meet, you can see that most of the flower is soft or out of focus.

Understanding plane of focus can have a profound effect on your flower shots.

It allows you to adjust your photo so that what you want your viewer to pay attention to is sharp, while the soft, out-of-focus parts help to direct your viewer's eye toward what is important in the composition.

 **Key Lesson:** Changing your **plane of focus** can greatly influence which parts of the flower are sharp and which parts are blurry. Be sure to move around and experiment with how this can impact your composition.

Typically, flower photographers will choose to focus on the center of the flower, much the same way a portrait photographer focuses on the eyes.

This is a good guideline, but remember that it is *just* a guideline.

Ultimately, you get to choose what is important. If you want your viewer to look at the texture of the petals, then you are going to want to petals to be your point of focus.

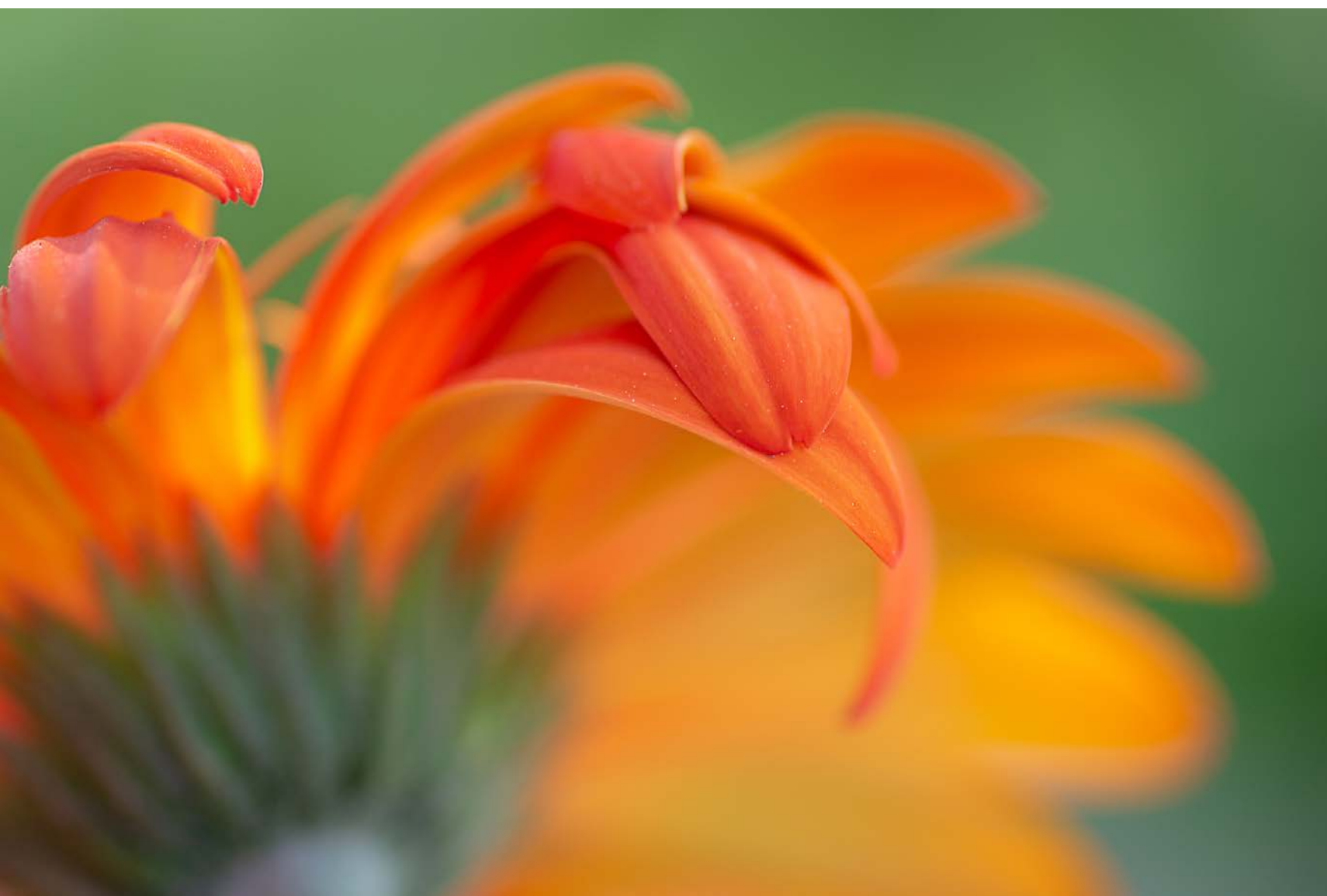


Image 023 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Controlling the depth of field gives you an enormous amount of control over your photograph, and when used effectively it can help you achieve stunning and unique images. It can highlight your subject, soften distracting elements, and create beautiful bokeh. Take the time to practice and understand it so that you can use it to its fullest potential.

SHUTTER SPEED

After deciding on your ISO and aperture, you are ready to adjust your shutter speed.

Even if you must make your shutter speed quite slow to achieve proper exposure, you need not worry because your camera should be nice and stable on a tripod.

One situation where I will make an exception to the order of my setup is when there is wind.

Wind is a game-changer, because it makes the shutter speed at which I shoot more of a priority.

I want to be able to “freeze” that flower movement to avoid motion blur.

When shutter speed is the priority for me, I must take an assessment of how much and how fast the flower is moving, and then decide what shutter speed will work.

The day that I wrote these previous paragraphs, and created Image 023, I shot in the wind at 1/125th of a second, and I was able to get nice, crisp shots.

 **Key Lesson:** Wind can have a huge impact on your flower photos. Aside from packing it in and coming back to shoot another day, here are some additional options:

Create a windbreak – I have used pieces of wood, cardboard, and even a chair tipped on its side to block the wind and lessen the movement

Clips – Tall flowers will typically move more in the wind. If you can clip them to something sturdy or even attach them carefully to some other flowers, you can lessen their movement. Specialized clamps, called “plamps” (Google it) can be used to keep your subject stable as well.

Wait a bit – If the wind is intermittent, you can simply wait until after the flower stops moving from a big gust, and then quickly focus your image and shoot.

Take your flowers inside – This works if the flowers are yours (avoid snipping your neighbor’s flowers unless they have given permission!), and you are willing to snip them and bring them inside.

Of course, shooting indoors will often mean a big change to your image, but sometimes it is the better option.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRIORITIZING SHUTTER SPEED

Once you have decided to make shutter speed a priority, you will need to go back to your other settings and make some decisions.

Sometimes just bumping your ISO up will do the trick.

Other times, you may be able to sacrifice a bit of your DOF by lowering the f-stop and opening up the aperture to allow in more light.

Freezing the image with your flash can work as well.

Ultimately you have to decide which is going to help you achieve the shot that you want without sacrificing what is important to your image.

Let's review the basic setup for shooting flower images.

You can use the chart on the right for a quick reference or to refresh your memory. Get in the habit of working through the steps each time you shoot so that you don't miss something.

There is nothing worse than shooting several images only to find that they are all over or under-exposed because you didn't adjust your camera settings beforehand.

Steps for basic camera settings before shooting:

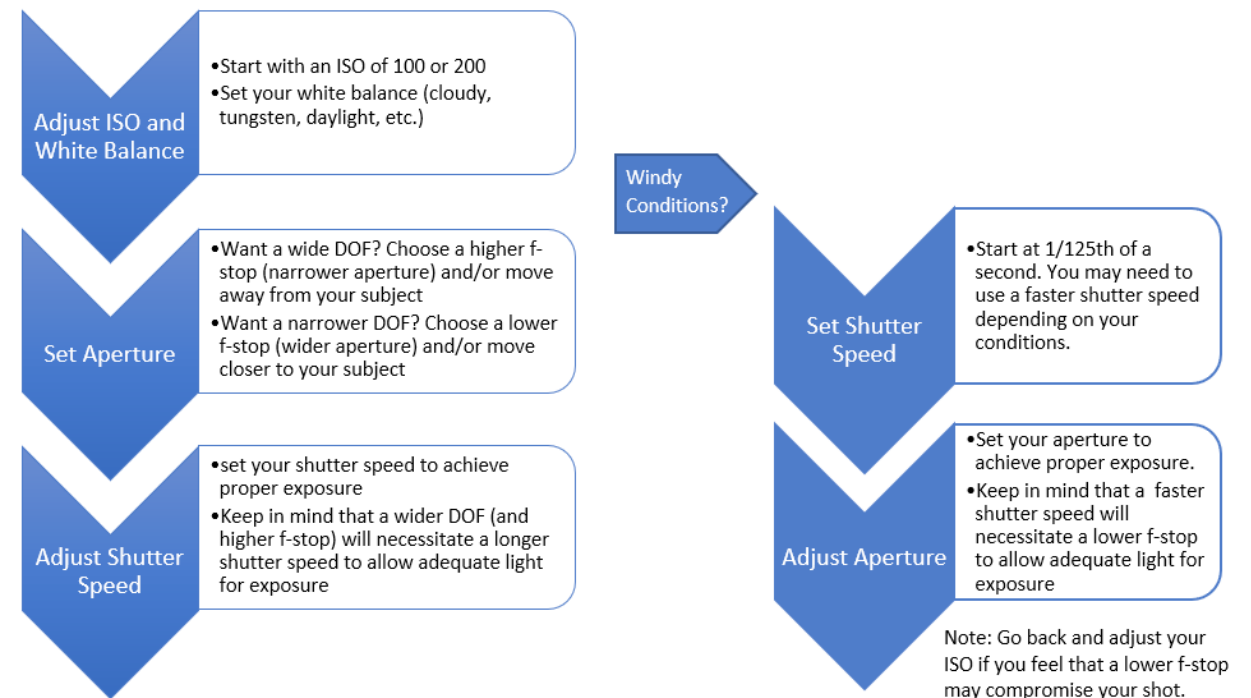


Image 024

THE SHUTTER BUTTON AND CAMERA SHAKE

Another important thing to consider when setting up your camera to shoot flower images is the shutter itself. Putting your finger on the shutter release button can cause vibrations that can ruin a photograph by causing blur through camera shake. This can happen even if the camera has been mounted to a tripod!

There are a couple of options available to avoid unnecessary camera blur and keep your photos sharp.

One option to keep your hand free of the shutter button and avoid blur is to use a remote shutter release.

There are both wired and wireless versions available, and you will have to check your camera make and model to see what is compatible with what you have.

Both are great; although wireless options are a preference to avoid messing around with wires, especially when you are shooting outdoors where they can snag onto the plants that you are trying to photograph.

Another option to avoid camera shake is to use your self-timer delay. I use this technique regularly when shooting flowers. My camera offers the option of setting the timer to 2 or 10 seconds. I find **2 seconds works fine** for freeing my hand from the lens and avoiding human-caused camera shake.



Key Lesson: Two ways to prevent blur when depressing the shutter release button are by using a remote shutter release (wired or wireless) or using the camera self-timer delay setting to get your hands free from the camera.

MANUAL VS. AUTOMATIC FOCUS

One more thing that I recommend for your camera setup is that you manually focus your lens instead of letting it focus automatically.

Relying on auto-focus and allowing the camera to decide where the focus point is can often lead to disappointing results, especially when you are shooting with a narrow DOF.

Shoot in manual focus mode and review your shots periodically to make sure that *what you want to be in focus is actually* in focus.

Self-Check Quiz:

1. Choose one: To achieve a nice blurry, out-of-focus background, or bokeh, you should **increase/decrease** your aperture.
2. Choose one: A macro lens will give you a **wider/narrower** DOF than other non-magnifying lenses.
3. True or False: Another thing that affects how much of your photo is sharp and how much is out of focus is the plane of focus.
4. Shutter speed is not a high priority unless there is _____.
5. What are two ways to avoid camera shake when activating the shutter?
6. Aside from changing your f-stop or ISO, what are two other strategies for dealing with wind?
7. What are the first two settings you should adjust before a shoot?

 **Shooting Assignment:** Using a very narrow DOF (set for a lower f-stop), take several photographs of a flower. Start with your point of focus on the part of the flower that is closest to you and move that spot back just a little for the next shot. Keep doing this until the part of the flower farthest away is sharp. Compare the photos and see which ones you like the best. Why do you like them? Did this exercise help you see an interesting feature of the flower that you didn't notice before?

03

NATURAL LIGHT

Like many flower photographers, I have a strong preference for shooting in natural light.

The quality and quantity of light can greatly affect your final images, and you are often at the mercy of things like the weather, which is out of your control.

But there are many things that you can control, and the results that you can achieve with natural lighting make it worth a photographer's time to make the most of it.

NATURAL LIGHT INSIDE

You can take advantage of the natural light indoors.

One of my favorite places to shoot flowers is in a southwest-facing window in our house.

I extended my windowsill and made it wider to take advantage of the light that comes through for photographing flowers.

The green foliage outside my window makes for a nice background. And, as the sun moves over the course of the day, I can take advantage of the varying qualities of light that it provides.

It is worth your time to find an indoor place to practice your flower photography, as the elements don't always allow for good outdoor shooting.

There are many days when the wind has driven me inside to photograph my potted plants or cut flowers from the garden or florist.

When shooting indoors, having a diffuser is important, as the sunlight shining through a window can be quite harsh.

You can also use a commercial diffuser, sometimes called a scrim, which comes in a variety of sizes, and most fold down so that you can pack them easily.

Or you can use materials around your house to create your own. I have some sheer drapes that serve this purpose in my house.

The time of day can influence the quality of light coming through the window.

The lovely golden tones of early morning, and later evening, are great for photographing flowers.

You can achieve some nice backlight at these times of the day, depending upon the orientation of your window.

One of the disadvantages of shooting in a window is the direction of light.

Because your light is coming through that one window, your subject will often have a shadowed side.

You can partially correct for this by using a reflector to bounce light back into the shadowed side.



Image 025 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

In this early shot of a teacup and flowers, you can see the shadow on the bottom part of the image, which was created by the direction of the light shining through the window.



Image 026 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

In the final teacup and flower image, you can see that using a reflector to bounce the window light back onto the shadowed area lessens the shadowed parts from the first image. The result is a brighter, more balanced lighting scenario.

Again, the commercial variety is easy to find and folds down nicely for packing into your gear kit. I have often used a simple piece of white poster board to this purpose.

I recently shot some images of a small teacup and flowers in my favorite window.

In Image 025 I didn't use a reflector and you can clearly see the shadowed side of the teacup at the bottom of the image. After changing my setup and adding a reflector, I was able to balance the light and brighten the picture in the final version in Image 026.

Another option to provide fill light, and bring out details from those spots that are in shadow, is using a "fill flash."

Sometimes the in-camera flash can work well. However, if you are using a longer lens you may need to use a flash bracket and an external flash to get the lighting where you need it.

NATURAL LIGHT OUTSIDE

Shooting outdoors can be very rewarding for flower photographers.

The great outdoors also comes with its own set of challenges.

Weather conditions, time of day, and challenging locations can make or break your outdoor shooting experience.

Quantity and quality of light can change quickly, and a photographer must stay on his or her toes.

But the trade-off is outstanding light that you just can't mimic with a flash.

It is worth the trouble.

WHAT TYPE OF DAY?

One of my favorite days for outdoor shooting is overcast and bright.

These usually come when clouds are high and thin. The clouds act like a giant soft box, offering soft, even, balanced lighting with little, to no, shadows.

Sunny, bright days are often the bane of photographers' lives

and are to be avoided at all costs.

However, bright sunny days are quite good for macro photography, offering enough light to properly expose your shot, even with a very narrow aperture.

You just need to be extremely aware for the potential of harsh shadows and bright, "blown out" spots.

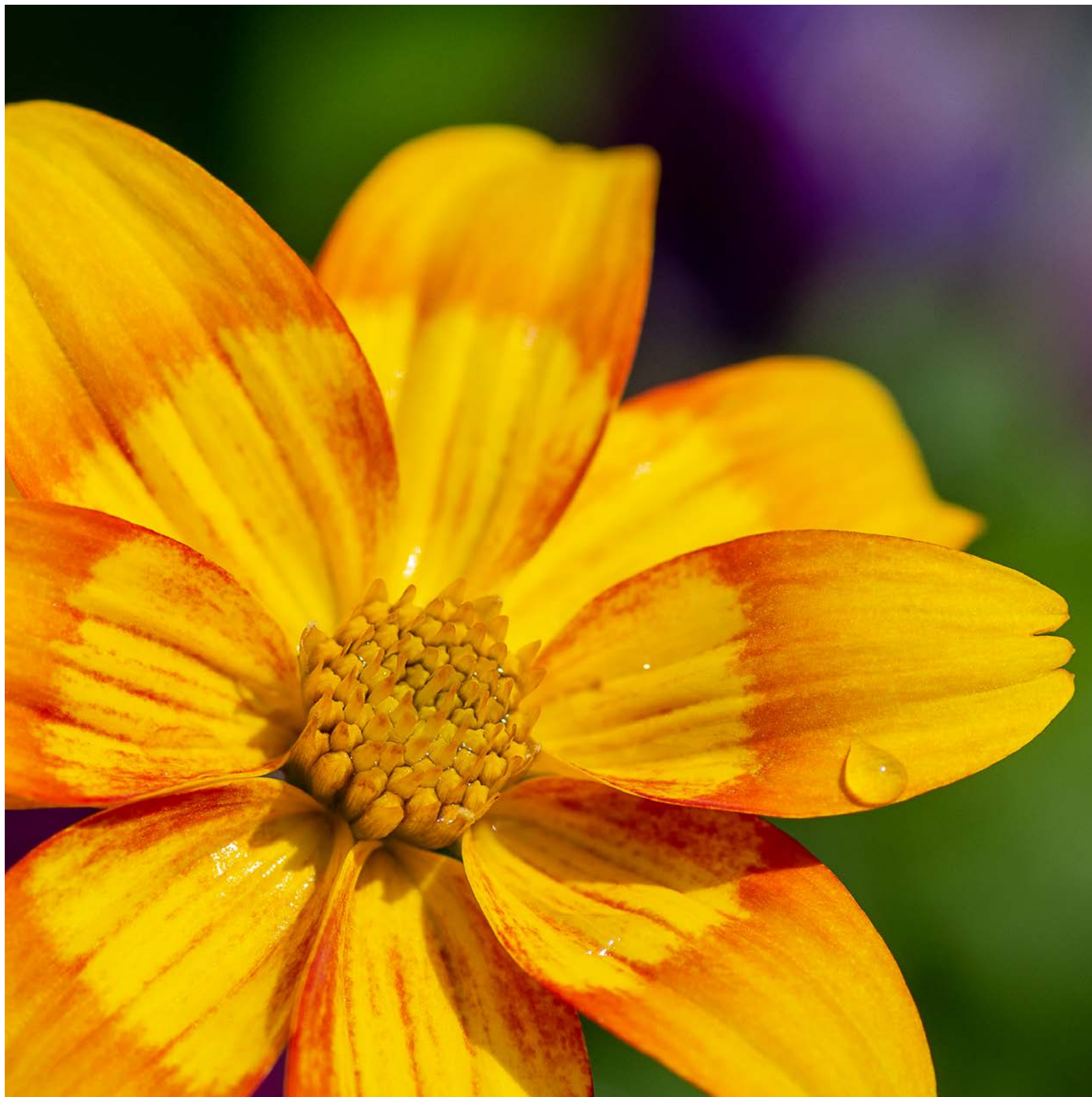


Image 027 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

While a bright sunny day can work for macro flower photography, you should do a quick check for overexposed spots. Water and shiny vegetation can both cause blow-outs in the highlight end of the histogram. Reviewing your histogram or “highlights” is always a good idea.

One way to bring light, and detail, out of the shadows of your shot is to use your flash.

“Fill flash” from either your in-camera flash or from an external source can be quite helpful.

Another option is to use a reflector to bounce light into those potential dark spots.

Check your histogram regularly on sunny days, and if you are getting blown-out spots you can either increase your shutter speed or stop down your aperture to get the proper exposure.

Heavily overcast days may require the use of a flash or a slower shutter speed with a tripod. I will talk more about using a flash in greater detail in Chapter 4.

 **Key Lesson:** A histogram is a great tool when shooting flowers. It allows you to quickly assess for proper exposure. Be sure to check your histogram regularly for underexposure or overexposure, including blown-out highlights on the flower petals or background.



Image 028 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

*This image, which was
taken in the evening,
has a nice golden tone.*

*The light is soft, but
still bright enough to
show the details and
texture of the flower
buds and petals.*

WHAT TIME OF DAY IS BEST?

The quality of light changes in big ways over the course of a day. Sometimes you don't have much choice of when you can shoot.

Certain types of flowers only open up in the middle of the day and that is when you must catch them.

There are times, however, when the light is more favorable, and you should try and take advantage of those times if you can.

Morning and evening are special times for all photographers, and the light created by a rising or setting sun can be magical when shooting flowers.

The light at these times is often softer, as the angle of the sun forces the light to make its way through more of the earth's atmosphere, which acts as a diffuser.

Morning and evening also produce light that is warmer in color temperature.

The light at these times of day has a golden tone to it, making it appear yellow or orange. These warm tones give evening light a distinct appearance that most of us recognize easily.



Image 029 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Backlight, created by placing your subject between your light source and yourself, can be a wonderful way to highlight a flower's features. The hairs on the stem, flower, and buds are much more noticeable because of the use of backlight in this photograph.

Another wonderful thing about morning and evening light is that the angle of the sun allows you to create backlight for your subject.

Using backlight with flowers can be very rewarding, as it often highlights textures (such as fine hairs or thorns) and the translucent nature of the petals and leaves on some flowers.

💎 Key Lesson: Take advantage of the golden tones and softer light offered in the early morning and late evening times of day. This can also be a great time of the day to try a backlit shot, which can highlight your flower's features in a bold and interesting way.

Keep in mind that when shooting into the sun, you can get lens flare. To avoid those dreaded spots or haze, try using a lens hood. If you do get some haze from shooting into the sun, there are ways to correct this problem during post-processing, which I will discuss more in Chapter 8.

WHERE SHOULD YOU PHOTOGRAPH?

Depending on what your subject is, you may not have too much choice about where you photograph your flowers.

If you are shooting in the field or your backyard, you have to go to where the flowers are.

Let's take a look at some of the possible locations that you might find yourself in, and discuss how they may affect the lighting in your flower photographs.

FULL SUN

As I've already said, full sun isn't a terrible thing for flower photographers to contend with and can actually be of benefit in some situations. Just be aware of possible shadows and highlights and how they may affect your photo.

CAMERA METERING CONSIDERATIONS

If you are shooting the flower in a way that creates a bright background, like shooting upwards with the sky behind it, you will want to carefully consider how to expose your subject properly. I recommend you set your metering to center-weighted or spot metering so that the camera exposes for the flower instead of the bright background. Unless, of course, you are attempting to create a silhouette image of the flower, then in that case evaluative or matrix metering is the way to go.

 **Key Lesson:** Cameras typically have three metering modes. To expose your shot properly, be sure to choose the setting that works best. Evaluative or matrix metering will allow the camera to look at the whole scene and decide how to meter the shot based on everything it "sees." Center-weighted metering focuses on an area in the middle of the frame and spot metering only looks at the light around your focus point. If you have a very bright background, center-weighted or spot metering will help you expose your shot properly, especially in backlit situations.

SHADE

Although you don't have to worry as much about shadows and overexposed spots, **shade offers its own challenges.** Shade can sometimes make it difficult to provide *enough* light to showcase a flower's features and details. You may need to use reflectors or a flash to get enough light onto your subject. Alternatively, you may have to lengthen your shutter speed to allow additional light to properly expose your shot.

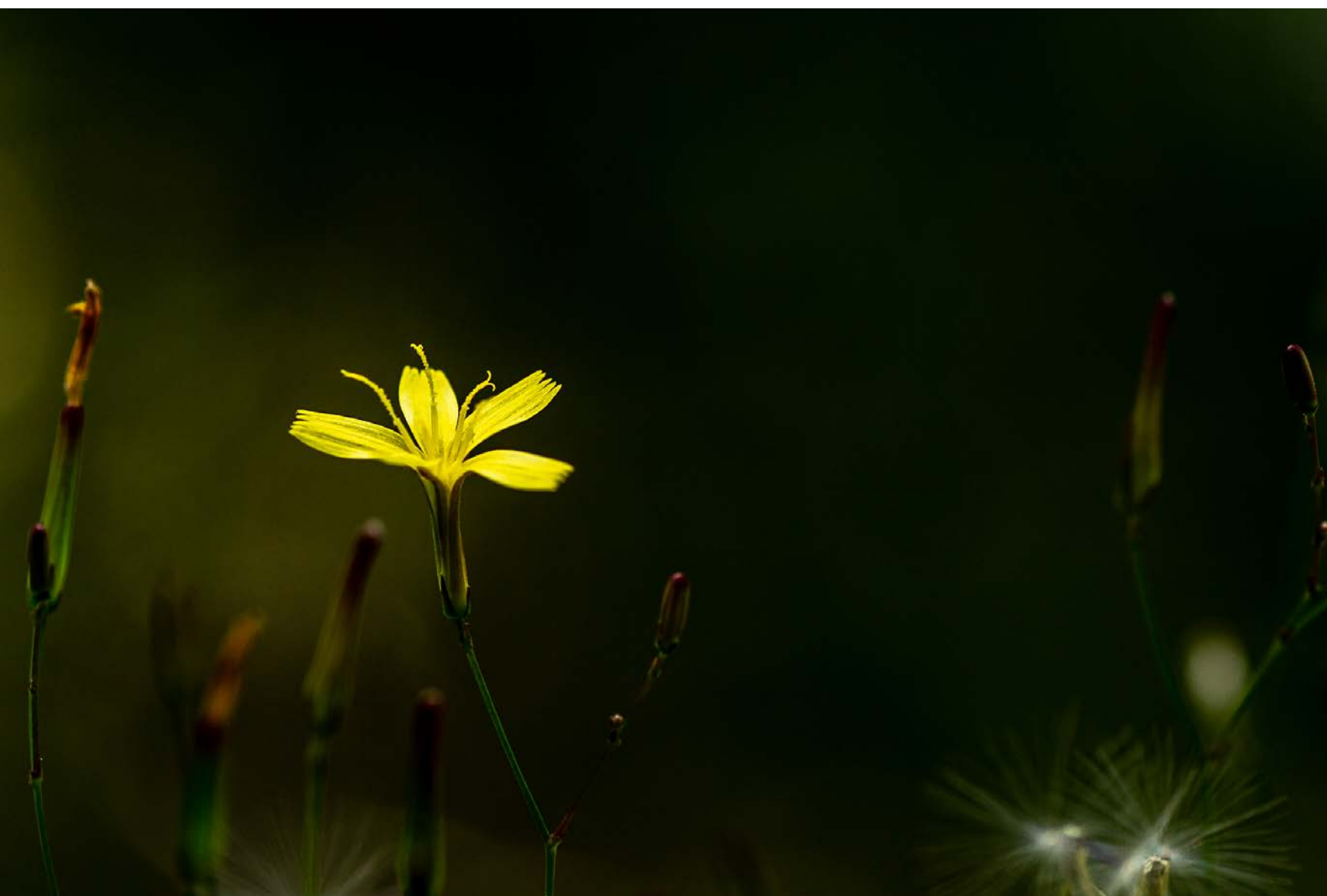


Image 030 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

This shot was taken in the woods. I liked the moody affect the dappled light created, with the spot of light on the yellow flower, and darkness all around it.

DAPPLED LIGHT

This is a unique mix of bright spots and shadows, which can ruin portrait shots, but can actually be quite a good thing for flower photographers. You will often find dappled shade if you shoot in the woods or under trees. You can work it to your advantage, using the bright spots to highlight your subject, while providing a non-distracting background. I often shoot cut flowers on my deck. We have a willow tree that provides dappled light and I love moving things around to highlight certain flowers, or parts of the flower, in different ways. It can create very dramatic or moody shots when used to its full advantage.

Self-Check Quiz:

1. What are some advantages to shooting indoors?
2. A _____ is a useful tool for bouncing light into a shadowed area.
3. True or False: Overcast days are not good for flower photography.
4. On bright days, check your _____ regularly for overexposed spots.
5. True or False: Morning or evening light can be warmer, creating a yellow/orange tone in your photos.
6. In which situation can center-weighted or spot metering be helpful?
7. _____ is great for highlighting a flower's texture.

 **Shooting Assignment:** Using a “portable” flower (in a vase or pot that you can move around), shoot your subject in the shade, full sun or overcast, and dappled light.

Shoot your flower in the morning or evening and try using backlight. Observe how the different kinds of light highlight different features of your flower. Which light do you like best? Consider how you might use the different kinds of light to showcase different flowers.

04

**ARTIFICIAL LIGHT: WHEN AND
WHY YOU SHOULD USE IT**



Image 031 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

As I said in Chapter 3, there are times when artificial light is necessary for flower photography.

There are even times when artificial light is *better* depending on what you are trying to achieve.

Let me walk through the times that you should use artificial light and what you need to get that light where you want it.

When I say “artificial light,” most of the time I am talking about using some sort of flash, but there are other kinds of artificial light and you need to be aware of the benefits and drawbacks of using those lights.

AMBIENT LIGHT FROM CONTINUOUS ARTIFICIAL LIGHT SOURCES

Using ambient light, the light already present in a scene, can be tricky, especially if that light is coming from multiple artificial sources. It can be challenging to figure out which camera settings to use and how to set up your shot to make the most of it.

Artificial light can come from the incandescent bulbs (less commonly used now), fluorescent fixtures, and even LED light bulbs. All can affect the color balance of an image.

You need to be aware of your source(s) of light, so you can set your white balance appropriately.

Try and figure out what the dominant light source is on your subject, and then set your white balance to account for that particular source.

If I am in a room with overhead fluorescent lights and an incandescent lamp, I will set my white balance for the dominant fluorescent source, so that my photography doesn't look too blue.

Most of our room light comes from fixtures that hang above us or sit on tables around the room.

Although some indoor lighting can be quite pleasing, this light typically looks less natural, and it isn't always the most flattering light to showcase your flower images.

I **don't recommend using ambient light** alone **for your shots**, but you should make yourself aware of those other light sources in the room and how they may affect your images.



Image 032 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Artificial light, from manmade sources like a flash, can create wonderful images that highlight and enhance a flower's features. The texture and delicacy of this cranesbill flower is really brought out using the flash against a dark background.

ALTERNATIVE LIGHT SOURCE

Before I owned a portable flash, I would often set up shots with an LED lamp when shooting indoors. At times awkward and cumbersome, it did help me to achieve the one thing that I needed: to get light onto my subject where I wanted it and in the quantity that helped me to expose my shot properly.

I still employ my little LED lamp at times, because it allows me to 'see' how the light plays onto my subject.

If you haven't already gotten comfortable with lighting your subject with a flash, I recommend that you spend some time using a lamp in the way that I described.

Do some test shots photographing the same subject while lit from the side, the back, the top, the bottom, closer, and farther away (making the light stronger and weaker). You can learn a lot about how light, from different angles and at different strengths, can affect your subject.

IN-CAMERA FLASH

Your in-camera pop-up flash is an important and helpful source of light for your photographs. It can be used to provide a burst of light to your subject to 'freeze' it, and it is also often used as 'fill light' for shadowed areas.

However, if you are shooting close to your subject with a wide or long lens then much of the light will be blocked, rendering it useless.

Because so much of flower photography involves getting close to your subject, I recommend that you limit the use of your pop-up flash for times when you aren't using a macro lens or working too close to your subject.

I will often use it for a fill light when working in dappled light or bright sunlight to reduce shadows, but only if I am far enough away for it to be effective.

EXTERNAL FLASH

A Speedlight, or external flash, is a good option for getting light to your subject when shooting flowers.

This type of flash can be mounted onto your camera's hot shoe, or it can be positioned elsewhere using a stand, flash bracket, or tripod, and a means of syncing back to the camera.

Sometimes, with the extra height of the flash, just mounting it onto your camera hot shoe can be enough to get light to your subject without creating undesirable shadows, depending on the size of your lens.

However, you won't always want your light source coming from the direction you are shooting.

This type of direct light can cause your subject to look harsh, making your photo look less natural.

The nice thing about most flash units that mount onto your camera is that they have a swiveling head that can be adjusted up and down. This allows you to "bounce" your light off of other surfaces, providing a softer, more natural light for your subject.

When you still can't achieve the correct light from the unit mounted ON your camera, you can try moving the flash elsewhere and triggering it remotely.

Some electronic flashes rely on the pop-up flash to trigger them through an optical sensor. Others can be synced with the camera using a device that mounts to the hot shoe and sends a radio wave.

You just need to be sure that if you are using a flash that is triggered by your pop-up flash, that you have an unobstructed line from your camera to that external unit. You may need to consult the manufacturing brand to find out which will work for your camera.

Another option for providing light to your subject is a ring or macro flash.

This type of flash connects to the camera's hot shoe and also mounts onto the very end of the lens, much like a filter or lens hood.

The ring provides bright light, close to your subject, and can be great for allowing photographers to shoot at smaller apertures, helping them to achieve a wider depth of field.

A drawback to this device is that the lighting is somewhat shadowless, which can make your images appear less natural. However, it also is a stylish type of look.

WHEN SHOULD I USE A FLASH?

Aside from using a flash for fill light and to properly expose a scene when shooting in low light, there are times that you should make use of a flash to achieve certain affects.

Backlit scenes can be hard to achieve with natural light, unless you are willing to wait for the perfect time of day and hope that the weather co-operates.

With an external flash, you can achieve backlighting quite easily by placing your flash unit between your subject and the camera (requires off-camera syncing).

If you find your subject is too dark, you can then use a reflector to bounce a little of that backlight back onto your subject from the front.

Flower photos where the subject is brightly lit and the background is dark are very nice for highlighting the flowers' features. Again, this type of shot is easy to achieve with a flash and dark background. If done well, the background doesn't even have to be black – just simply dark.

To achieve this effect, I set my ISO to 100 or 200, set my f-stop to f22 or greater, and set my flash at full power (this works because I am shooting at a higher f/stop – smaller aperture). I usually position the flash to one side, being careful not to expose the background to light. If you are using a dark

background, don't place it too close to your subject (I suggest 20 inches or more) and be sure that the flash doesn't illuminate it. You can improvise a "barn door," by attaching a piece of cardboard on the side of your flash with an elastic rubber band, to block the light on the background side.

 **Key Lesson:** Barn doors are light modifiers that help direct the light exactly where a photographer wants it. These flaps, typically used on studio lights, are found on the top, bottom, left, and right of the light source. You can fashion your own version of a barn door by attaching a piece of cardboard to the side where you don't want the light to shine. Keep the cardboard and an elastic rubber band handy when shooting dark backgrounds.

You may need to move all the above elements around a bit until you can achieve shots that light your flower, while leaving the background dark.

Once I have achieved a setup that works, I like to keep it in place and try a few different flowers. This is a great strategy for shooting cut flowers or flowers in pots, indoors.



Image 033 – Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

This image of a hibiscus was shot at f40 using a 90mm macro lens. A black background was placed behind the flower and the flash was to the right of the subject.

💎 **Key Lesson:** You don't always need a black background to achieve the look shown in image 033. If the f-stop is high enough, and the flash power is bright enough, a shadowed background may work fine. If you DO need to darken the background you can use a variety of materials. I like using the black disk that came with my reflectors (called a black flag), or a piece of foam core that I have cut so that it stands up and can be moved around. A piece of black velvet fabric can also help you to achieve a nice black background, even outdoors in moderately bright light.



Image 034 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

I used a reflector to “bounce” the light onto this geranium. The result was warmer and more natural-looking lighting than I would have achieved from direct light from the flash.

HOW TO GET THE LIGHT RIGHT

When shooting with a flash, your goal is often to get that light looking as natural as possible. You can achieve natural-looking light in several ways, including where you place the light and how much of the light you provide.

LIGHT DIFFUSERS

One way to get a more natural look from the light of your flash is by making the light softer. There are a few ways you can soften the light from your flash. The most common way is by using a diffuser. This type of light modifier attaches to the flash and spreads the light.

Another way to soften the light and get more natural-looking light is by “bouncing” the light off of something onto your subject. If you are shooting somewhere with light colored ceilings and walls, you can aim your light at one of those spots. The light will spread even more and be dispersed in a way that further softens the light hitting your subject.

Flower photographers don't always find themselves in spots that have ceilings and walls, though.

What can you do to diffuse that light when shooting outdoors? A piece of poster board or a commercial reflector can help to spread the light, and because your subject is relatively small, it will do the trick quite nicely.

Another trick is to use a circular diffuser, or scrim, between your flash and your subject. Again, because of the size of your subject, you will find this method works quite well and you can experiment with holding the scrim closer and farther away from your flower to change the quality of light.

 **Key Lesson:** A handheld circular diffuser, called a scrim, can be a helpful tool for softening the light when shooting flowers. If you don't have one, try experimenting with some other materials. A sheer material, like nylon netting, spread over a frame can work nicely. Thin foam, like the kind used in mail packages, also works.

THE DIRECTION OF THE LIGHT

As I said earlier, shooting your subject with the flash aimed straight at your subject isn't the most flattering, natural look for your images. Where you place your flash can have a huge impact on how natural the light looks.

Think about the direction of your main natural light source, the sun.

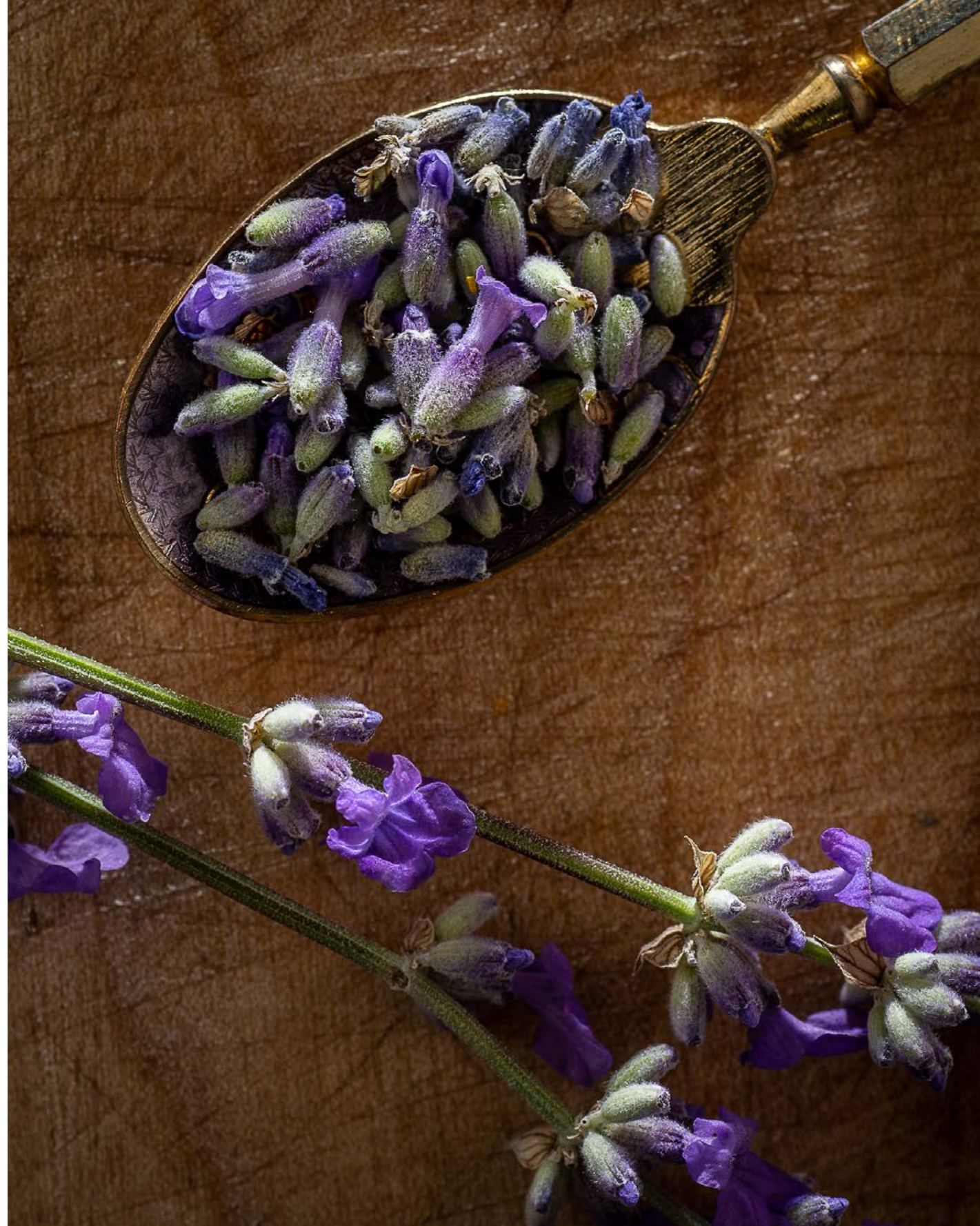
Most of the time, that light comes from the side or above your subject. Rarely do we see subjects illuminated from below, with natural light. Considering the angle of your light is an important step in creating the image you want to achieve.

I recommend moving your flash around when you are shooting, to see the different ways the angle of the light affects the texture of your subject and the shadows created. Use a light stand to shoot from above, or place your flash on the table beside your flower, to see which look you like best.

 **Key Lesson:** Experimenting and trying different angles are an important part of the process when shooting flowers.

Image 035 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

I wanted this image to have the look of being shot in the evening sun. I played with the angle of the flash, and I finally opted for placing the flash right on the board not too close to the flowers, but quite low in relation to my subject. I used a reflector to fill in some of the shadow that resulted and was quite pleased with the result.



Self-Check Quiz:

1. What are three ways you can soften artificial light to help it look more natural?
2. Should you use a higher or lower f-stop when creating a darkened background scene with a flash?
3. You can improvise your own _____ when you need to prevent the light from shining on certain parts of the scene.
4. True or False: Use of your pop-up flash should be reserved for times when you aren't shooting in close to your subject.
5. A _____ can be used to bounce light to where you need it.
6. Any material that diffuses or softens the light is called a _____. Some mount on your flash, and you can hold others in your hand.
7. An external flash can be mounted on a _____ or _____ to help get light where you need it.
8. True or False: All external flashes, or Speedlights, require you to connect a device to your hot shoe so that they can be triggered remotely.

 **Assignment:** Take several images of the same flower using your flash or a lamp that can be moved around. Try shooting with the light coming from different sides and angles, below and above. Note how moving the light source changes things like shadows, texture of the flower's features, and intensity of the light. Ask yourself: Which ones look more natural? Which do you like best?

05

COMPOSITION

As in all genres of photography, composition is key to getting a great shot. Many of the same guidelines and rules of composing that you use for other types of photography apply to your flower photography as well.

But there are also some specific things that you can do to really make those floral images pop.

If you have been shooting for some time, you may have applied many of the techniques that I am going to present already. However, try and think about how these techniques apply to flower photography specifically.

It is important to practice applying compositional techniques to your images. You can do this by looking at really great flower images and then thinking about why they worked and what techniques were used.

You can also do this with your own work, both during the shot and then later when reviewing your photos.

The above practice is an important step in training your brain and eye to look for and find the best way to present your subject.

What works for one shot may not necessarily work for another. But over time you will find that you develop a sense for what will work if you keep using and applying these strategies.



Image 036 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

To get great flower images, be prepared to get down to the flower's level. I was on my knees when taking this image of a wild aster in the woods.

THE ALL-IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVE

Perspective, or where you are in relation to your subject, plays a huge role in your images.

 **Key Lesson:** When strolling through the garden, you will typically find yourself viewing flowers from above. This bird's eye view of flowers can be very nice, but don't get stuck shooting all your flower photos from this angle.

The first thing you should do is get lower (this is where a mat or kneepads come in handy) and view the flowers at their level. This “flower's eye view” puts you in a position to really notice the shape and details of the whole flower.



Image 037 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

To get this image, I had to lay on the ground. Alternatively, I could have used my tripod with the center column reversed, but I liked the unique perspective and it allowed me to “see” things that I normally wouldn’t have.

Some flowers, like daisies, will look very different from this perspective and you will find you can get a less common shot and focus in on a part of the flower that you might have overlooked. Some flowers, like tulips, only really start to show their true shape from this perspective. So taking the time to get low can really pay off.

 **Key Lesson:** A viewpoint that many photographers overlook, but can offer very interesting images, is the underside or the back of the flower.

For this perspective, you have to get even lower to the ground if shooting in the field. If you are shooting cut flowers, you have the option of moving things around a bit to better view your flowers from the back side.

Shooting just a tiny part of the flower is a perspective that macro photographers enjoy and employ. Zooming in on the flower’s stamens, or just a few petals, can encourage your viewer to look at small details that they may overlook when viewing the entire flower.



Image 038 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

Changing your perspective can force you to look at your subject differently. I liked the unique perspective of this daylily's stamens and colorful petals when I moved in very close for this macro shot.

Small changes in your position can make a large difference in the appearance of your image. Move around and check out your subject from different angles, or spend a week only shooting flowers from below to see how these different perspectives can influence your composition.

 **Key Lesson:** When shooting in the field, be sure to pack something for working on the ground. Kneepads, a mat, or a blanket will make you comfortable shooting in different positions.

DEPTH OF FIELD

How much, or how little, depth of field an image has is an important factor in composing a shot.

If you want to draw attention to the jagged edges of a leaf, you can limit your depth of field so that the edge is the only thing in clear focus and the remainder of the shot is soft.

If you want to draw attention to the flower's stamens, as in Image 037, you can narrow your DOF so that only one stamen is in sharp focus and the rest remains a soft, pleasing blur.

When you combine the use of DOF with some of the other compositional tools that I will talk about, your image becomes that much stronger.

For more information on this important tool (or a refresher), pop back to Chapter 2 and see how you can make the most of your camera settings to influence your DOF.

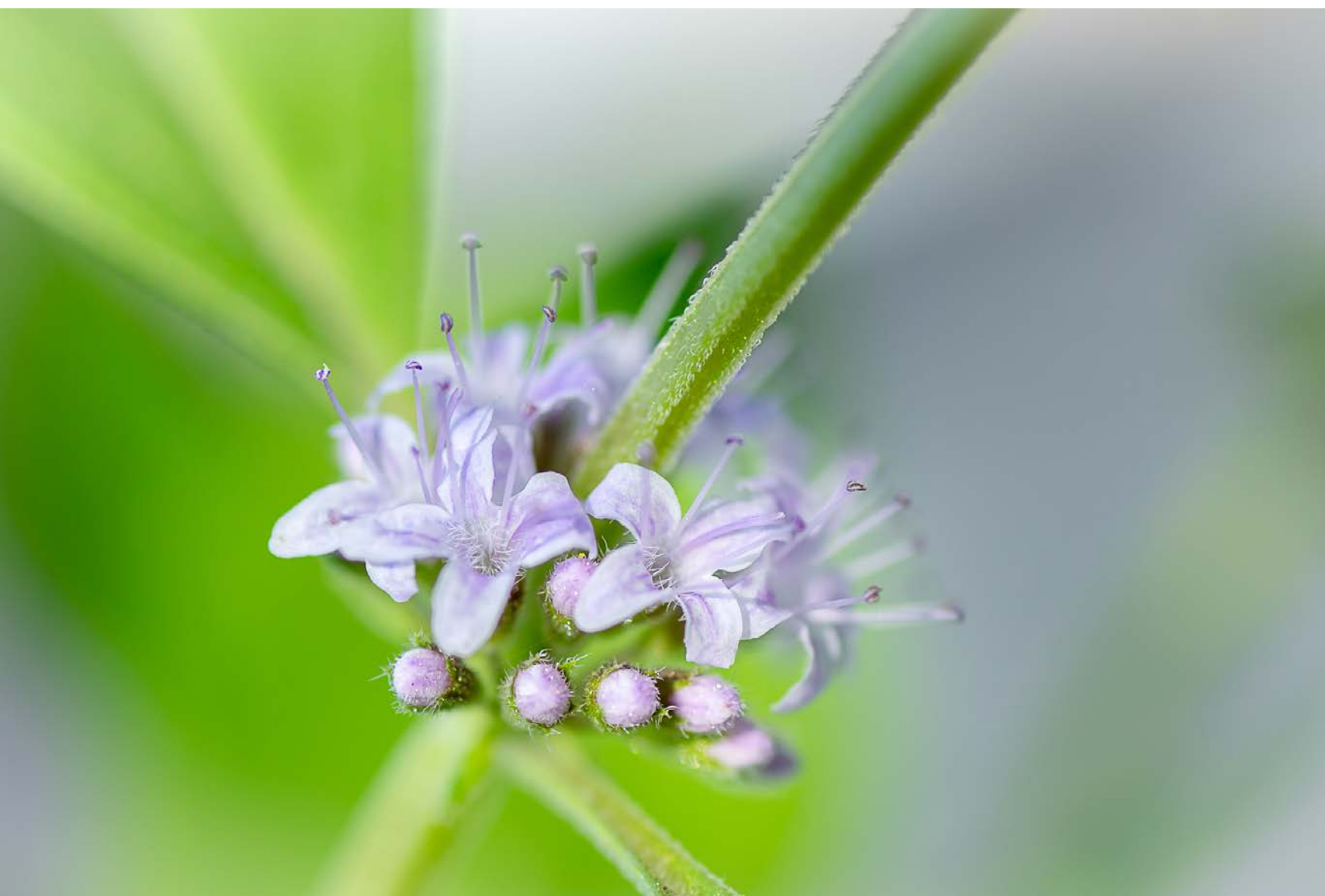


Image 039 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

If you are shooting multiple flowers with one standout flower in the bunch, placing it on the intersecting grid lines will help it pop.

RULE OF THIRDS OR GOLDEN CROP

Most of us are familiar with the rule of thirds, and we use the intersecting grid lines to help us compose our shots in a pleasing way.

This is a very helpful rule for flower photographs in general, and especially for images that have a shallow DOF.

Placing the **in-focus part of your image** on the intersecting grid lines will create an image that is more dynamic than simply putting it right in the middle of the photo.



Image 040 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

By using a shallow DOF with that single flower in focus, you can make it stand out even more! You can see how combining the strategies can be very useful in this image.

LINES

Leading lines are an important element in all genres of photography, and some of a plant's natural characteristics help to create great lines that you can use to improve a flower image.

Stems, petals, and leaves are often veined and can be used to draw the eye of the viewer toward the places that you want them to look.

Intersecting lines can create a more dynamic image by providing a sense of depth and movement.

The vertical lines of the flower stems can create some great patterns in your flower shots.

Look for lines when shooting, and see if you can utilize them in ways to make your final image really stand out.



Image 041 – Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

The veins on the petals of these irises played an important part in how I composed this image. I placed them in this way to lead viewers' eyes into and through the photo.

 **Key Lesson:** The curved lines of petals and leaves are a special characteristic of plants. Try to utilize them in your shots to create a sense of movement or help guide the viewer's eyes where you want them to look.



Image 042 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

Multiple flowers fading into the background create repetition and draw the viewer's eyes through the photo in this example.

REPETITION AND PATTERNS

Patterns occur everywhere in nature. Spirals, repeating lines and shapes, and alternating colors are easy to spot when you walk through a garden. The soft spiral of a rose and the intricate pattern created by the seeds of a sunflower are both wonderful examples of what nature has to offer. Train your eye to look for those patterns and see how you can use them to improve the composition of your photos.

Repeating elements in your flower photographs can add interest and strengthen the overall image.

You can also look for multiple flowers and find ways to photograph them so that you create a repeating element. Or you can look closely to see what patterns an individual flower can offer.

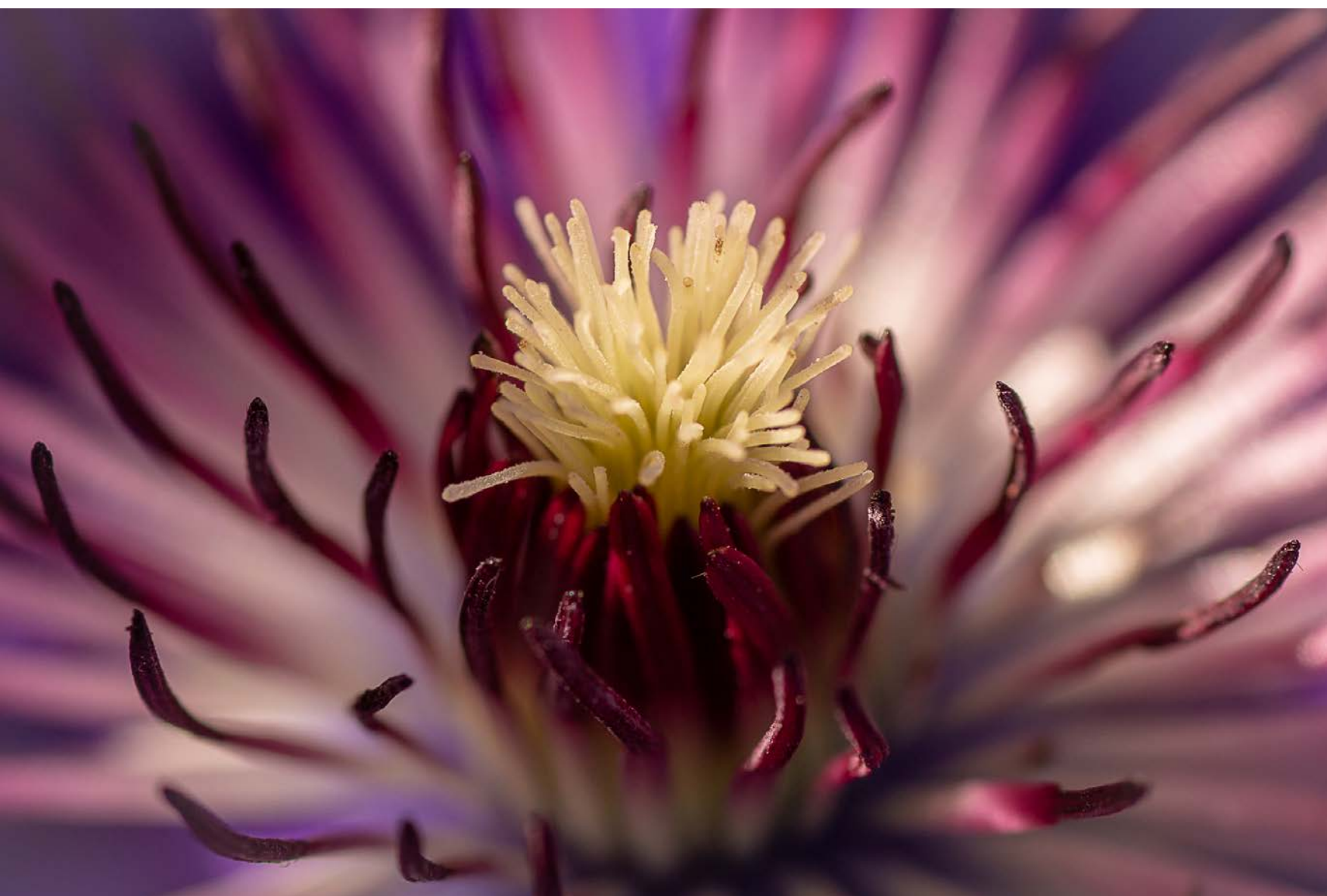


Image 043 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

The circular pattern of this clematis drew my attention and led to a zoomed-in shot of the flower's center that is not your typical flower shot but quite striking nonetheless.

GEOMETRY AND GRAPHIC SHAPES

Most people think of manmade subjects when they think about geometry. But again, nature has some geometric shapes that occur that can help you make your flower images stronger.

Triangles and vertical lines can be used to draw the eye in. Circles – a common shape in flower photography – can offer a sense of unity and hold the viewer's attention.

Look for shapes in your photos that can enhance the image and lead the viewer's eyes through the frame to where you want it.



Image 044 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

Implied triangles, created by the diagonal line of the stems and their placement in the image, guide the viewer's eyes to the oval shape of the flower.

BALANCE

Balance is all about visual weight, or what things in the image draw your viewer's attention.

Placement and the strength of the elements you are using affect balance in your photographs.

Photos that are balanced are visually appealing.

So remember when I said don't place your flower smack dab in the middle of your image? Well, there is a time when you can do that, to create a nice balanced and symmetrical image. And most flowers have great shapes for creating symmetrical images.



Image 045 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

The near symmetrical shape of this flower and its placement right in the center of the frame give the image a strong sense of stability.

But this type of symmetry isn't the only kind that you can explore in your flower images. You can also look for situations where two or more flowers create a *near* symmetrical image to get that sense of balance.

Both types of balance mentioned above are sometimes referred to as "formal" balance. The tougher, but often more rewarding type of balance, called "informal," happens when you have two or more elements in your photo placed in such a way to achieve a sense of harmony.

This informal balance can be difficult to achieve, but it is very important to develop when shooting flowers, especially in a garden full of different colors, textures, and tones. Be aware of the things that draw your eye. A distracting element, when placed correctly in an image, can become the thing that adds balance to your photograph.

Some elements to consider when trying to create balance in your flower photos are factors such as color (in particular red and orange), focus, light spots, large items, contrast, and the direction your subject is facing. These all carry visual weight, and you should make sure that you consider that when placing them in your image.

Flowers don't really "face" something the way people do, but you should treat the open face of a flower much the same way you do a person's face. Pretend your flower has eyes. When you photograph a person, you leave some space for the person to stare off into. Likewise, you should do the same with your flowers. It is unsettling to have them (or a person) near the edge of an image looking out, and unless you have a purpose for doing this (you may want to create a sense of unbalance) try to avoid it.



Key Lesson: Balance isn't just one thing; it is the combination of many elements, including light/dark, focus/out of focus, large/small, positioning, and color/tone. Make yourself an expert by exploring each one in turn. Then see if you can combine several elements to find balance in your photographs.



Image 046 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

What compositional techniques were used to create this image? Does it feel balanced or not? If yes, what provides the feeling of balance? If no, what could have been done to achieve that sense of balance?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Composition encompasses the many strategies that go into making a great image. The use of lines, patterns, repetition, DOF, perspective, shapes, placement, and balance should not be isolated. You must get comfortable considering all of these things, or at least the ones that apply to a particular scene, when you are out there shooting.

Practice looking for, and using, these compositional tools individually. Once you have a firm grasp of one, move on to the next. Don't be afraid to experiment and try something that goes against the grain. These are tools, and you need to figure out how to use them to make *your* images great.

 **Assignment:** Look at the photo images on the left and the next pages and consider which elements of composition were used. How do leading lines, geometric shapes, patterns, or placement play a role? Do the photos have a feeling of balance? Why or why not?



Image 047 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

This could have been a very “busy,” cluttered image. What technique helps make it less busy and guides the viewer to the subject?



Image 048 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Can you identify any repetition or patterns in this photo?



Image 049 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Balance can also be about elements such as light and dark. Does this image achieve a sense of balance?



Image 050 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

*How does the bottom left flower's placement help this otherwise chaotic photo?
What compositional tool was used to guide the viewer's eyes?*

Self-Check Quiz:

1. A great tool for composition that encourages you to change your viewpoint is called _____.
2. What compositional strategies does this image employ?



Image 051 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

5. True or False: Flowers that are in focus carry more visual weight than those that are out of focus.
6. To get low and find a different perspective when working in the field you may need to use _____ or reverse the center column in your tripod.
7. The soft spirals of a rose's petals are an example of which compositional tool?
8. Go online or find a flower book and identify three examples of each:
 - Use of the rule of thirds
 - Use of patterns
 - Use of lines
 - Use of an unusual perspective

3. Name five visual elements that carry weight in a photograph.
4. Choose one: Symmetry is an example of **formal/** **informal** balance.

 **Shooting Assignment:** Go through **your** personal collection of photographs and find a photo (it doesn't have to be a flower image) that demonstrates good use of:

- Rule of Thirds
- Patterns
- Lines
- Use of an unusual perspective

Now go out to a nearby garden or park and find flowers to photograph using each of those techniques.

06

**GETTING CREATIVE: HOW TO VISUALIZE AND
CREATE A GREAT SHOT**



Image 052 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

One of my favorite things about flower photography is finding ways to take an ordinary-looking flower and make it look very different and unique.

As I mentioned earlier, we are bombarded by flower images that look very similar, **every day**.

You can have a photo that is technically very good, in focus, and composed nicely but still lacks the impact to really grab attention.

This is where getting creative comes in. Getting creative isn't just about using tricks or techniques.

Getting creative involves visualizing a shot and carrying out the steps to make it happen. Sometimes, on your way to creating a shot that you've pictured, you find something else that is great or even better!

It is this creative process that leads to really unique shots that make an impact.

I was shooting this image of a pansy (Image 052), when I became distracted by the hairs in the middle of the flower. I zoomed in for a closer shot and ended up with an interesting abstract of the flower (Image 053). I don't always get what I expect during a shoot, and being able to "go with the flow" is an important part of the creative process.



Image 053 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Getting creative and finding your inner artist can be easy for some folks and challenging for others.

If you find it difficult, I suggest you spend some time each day perusing other people's work – it is a great source of inspiration.

I also find that daily and weekly challenges spur me on to try a different approach in my flower photography. Follow or join a group and use their ideas to be a guide or muse.

I struggled a bit with "becoming an artist" again upon the discovery of photography later in life.

Starting a daily photography challenge pushed me to explore a lot of different approaches.

As I write this, I am shooting and posting a flower photo a day.

Activities like this commit you to improving your techniques and keep your photographer's eye trained for the next interesting shot.

There are some alternative techniques that you can use to increase your chances of getting an interesting image.

We'll look at shooting abstract images, intentional camera movement, how to get great bokeh, use of

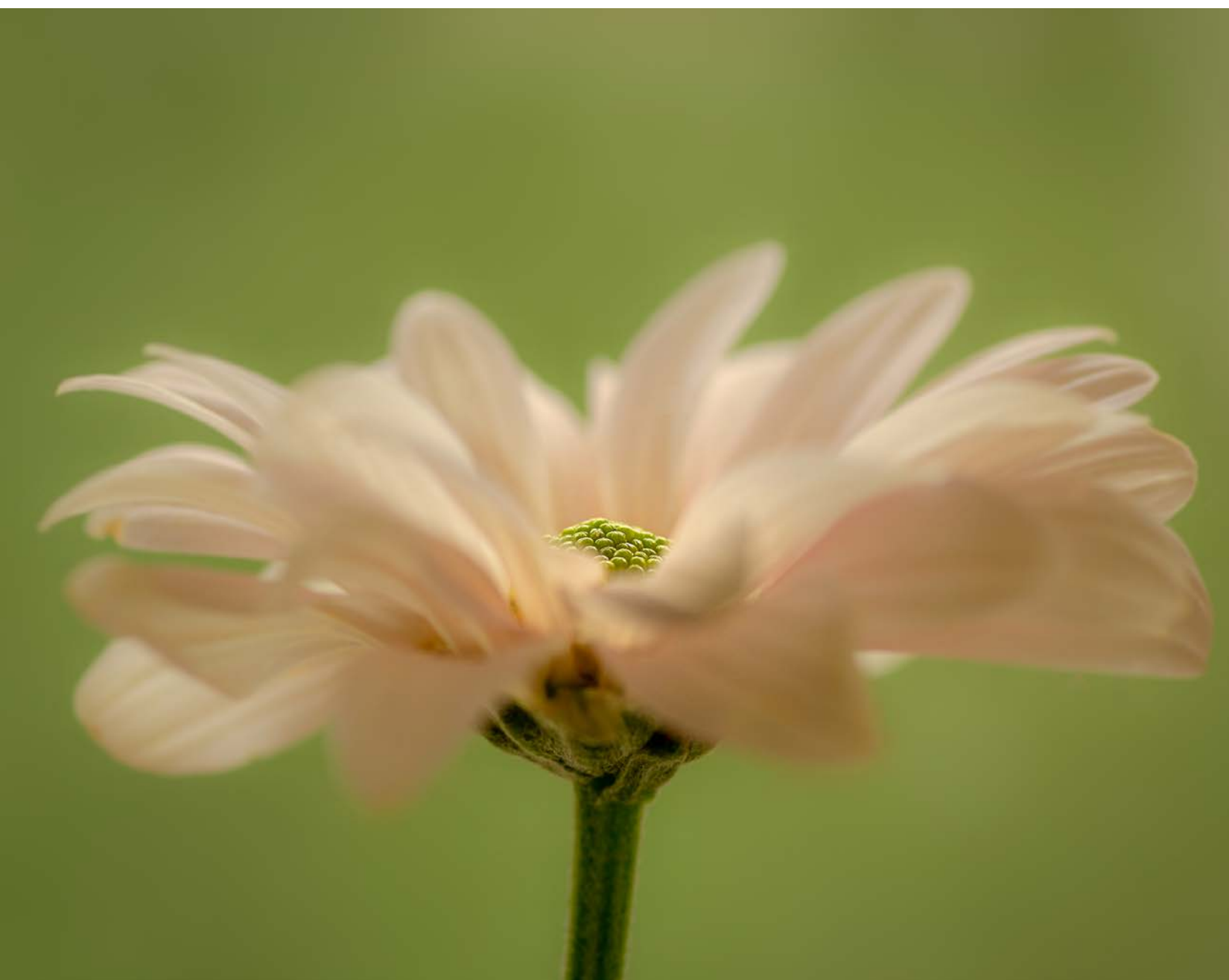


Image 054 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

I was taken with the softness of the petals when shooting this chrysanthemum. I opted for a shallow DOF to give the petals more softness and then blurred the remaining petals during post-processing to get a very soft effect overall. I was happy with the resulting “spot” of focus framed by the blurred petals.

water, and approaches like high and low key in this chapter.

We will also explore how choosing to use color or monochrome can influence your images.

 **Key Lesson:** Getting creative isn't *just* about using techniques; it is about freeing yourself to play and be artistic. Making mistakes is part of the creative process and you should give yourself plenty of opportunities to do so.

Unfortunately, creativity isn't something that you can “teach” someone. It is a lot like a toddler putting their hands into modelling clay and making something. You just have to get in there, get your hands dirty, and not be afraid to make some mistakes. It is from those mistakes that you will make your greatest discoveries and learn something new.

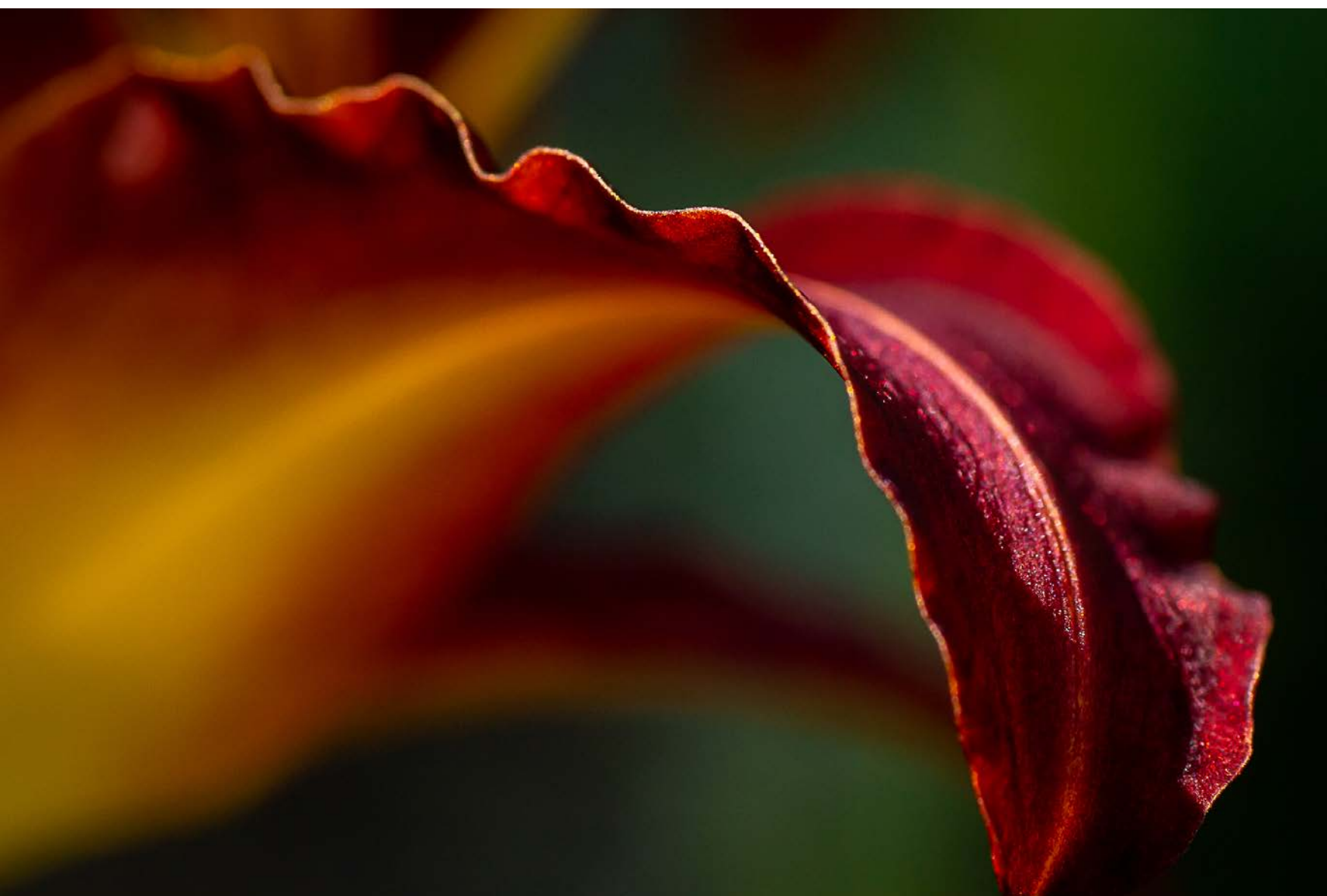


Image 055 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

ABSTRACT

I regret that I didn't find abstract imaging sooner, when I first got into photography.

Shooting abstract is the ultimate creative exercise, and it can teach you a lot about what colors, shapes, and forms make an impact on the mind, and also how you can use them to improve your photographs.

When a colleague suggested that I shoot abstract, I balked, mostly because I didn't understand what they were suggesting.

Now I see abstract photos as the ultimate intrigue. They are the 'mystery novels' of photography!

Often, abstract images allow me to simplify my photos down to one or two elements. When you do this, something magical happens.

Check out these abstract photographs:



Image 056 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



Image 057 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

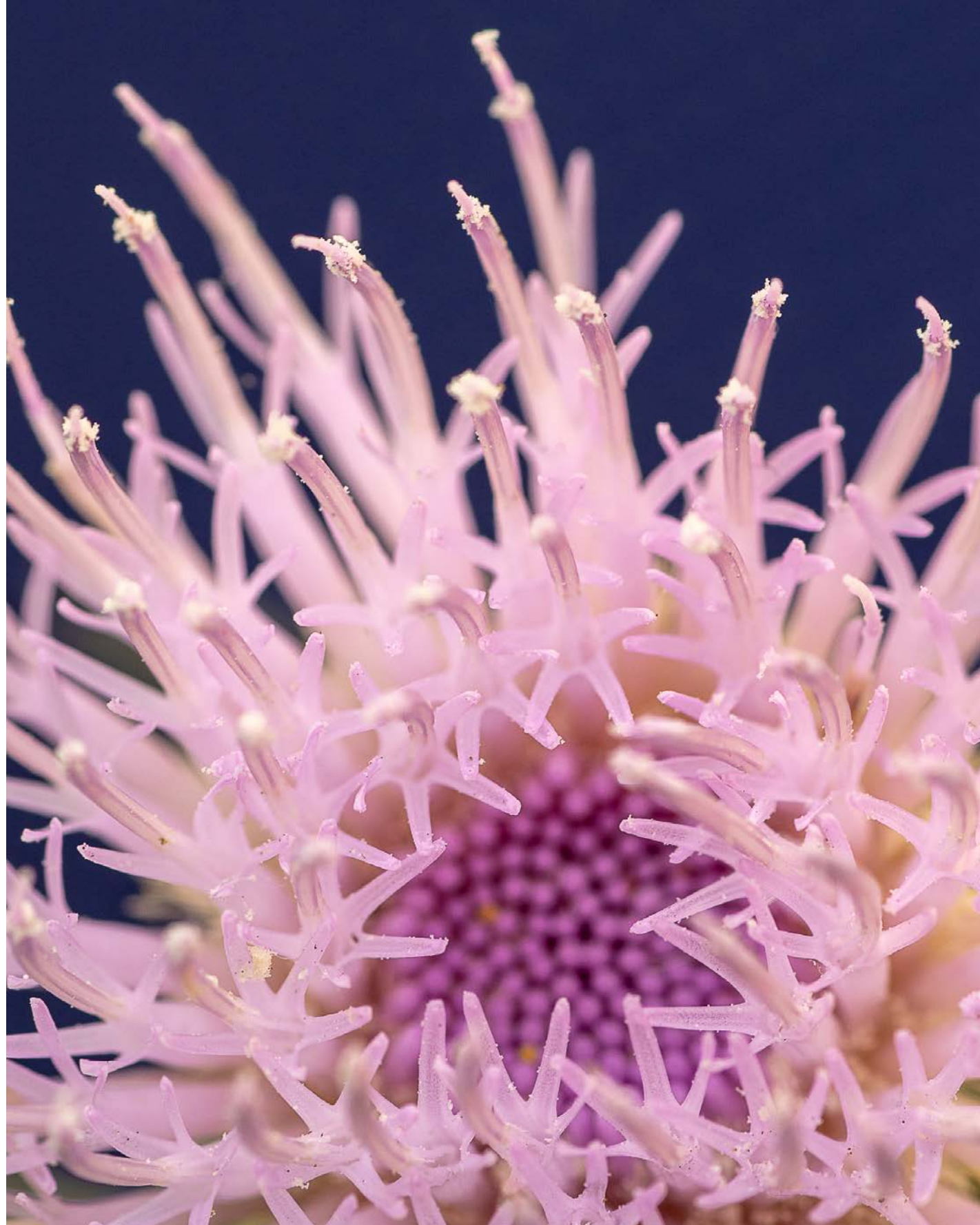


Image 058 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Images 055–058 are all abstract flower photographs.

It isn't a coincidence that these mostly show parts of flowers. Shooting abstract involves taking something out of context and trying to convey a feeling or mood through shapes, colors, and form.

Creating abstract images frees you from trying to create something *realistic*. It is a great way to get creative and not worry as much about breaking rules or doing something wrong.

When photographing flowers, try to move in closer and choose a piece of the flower to focus on. I like to show the viewer *some* of the flower and let them use their imaginations and feelings to interpret the image.

 **Key Lesson:** Shooting abstract flower images is a great way to get a unique flower shot as well as a fun approach for getting creative in your photography. Use the shapes, colors, and form of the flowers to guide your composition when shooting abstract.

Shooting Assignment: Pick a flower, indoors or out, and shoot it with the 'abstract' style in mind. Get creative and have fun, but pay attention to compositional tools like lines, patterns, and balance when creating your images.

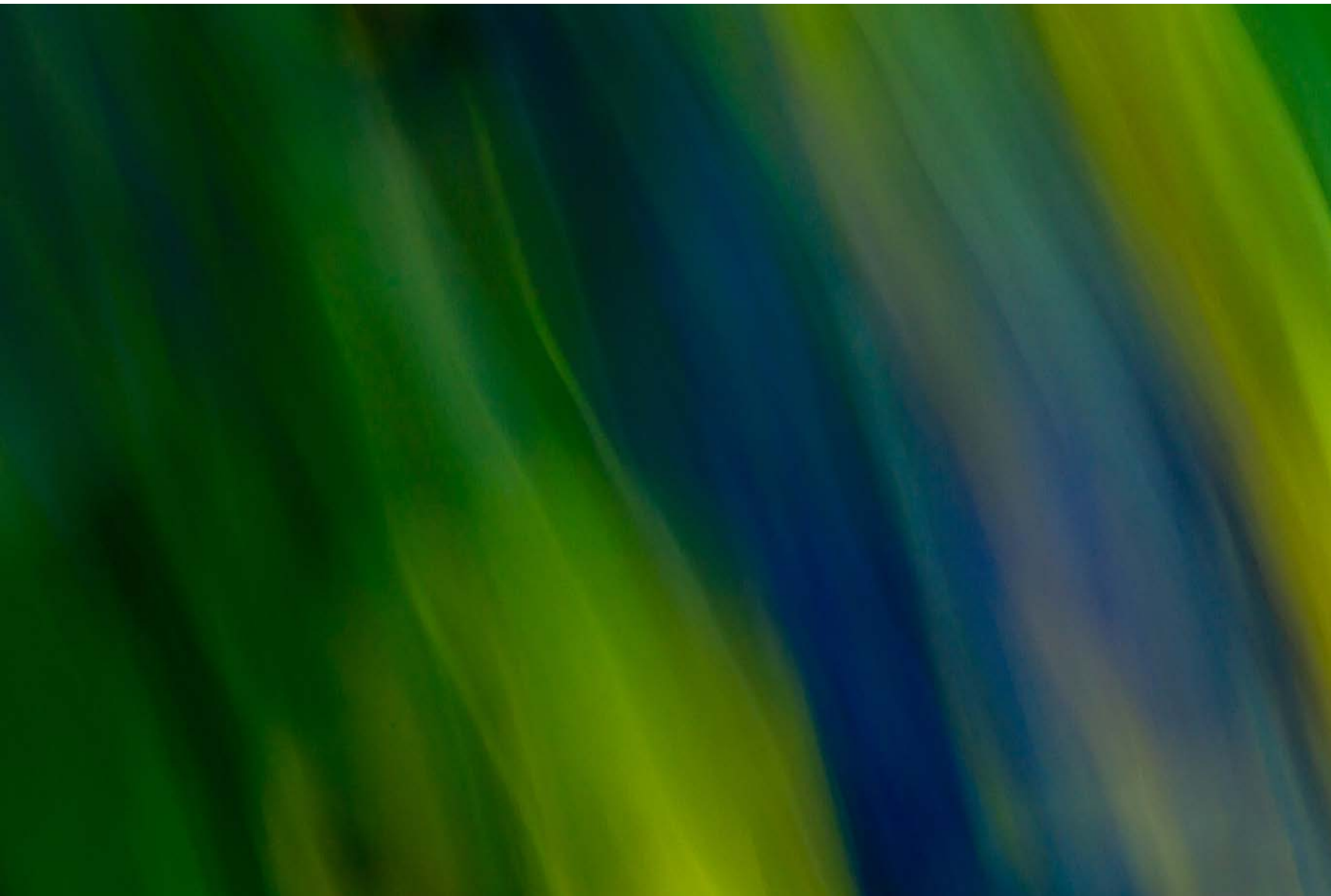


Image 059 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

This image doesn't look like a flower, but it is an ICM shot of some pansies. With a long shutter speed and a diagonal sweep, this abstract image is very different from your typical flower shot.

INTENTIONAL CAMERA MOVEMENT

Another unique and interesting way to photograph flowers is to use an approach called intentional camera movement (ICM).

The concept of ICM has been around for a while in the form of panning while photographing a moving subject. The resulting images give you a blurry background while maintaining the subject in focus.

ICM differs a bit from panning photos, as typically the entire image is blurred.

The movement of the camera can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, a twist, or even a shake. Shutter speed should be slow (1-2 seconds or longer) and aperture should be set to expose the shot correctly. These shots are best done in low light or with a neutral density filter to limit the amount of light that reaches the sensor.



Image 060 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

This image shows the pansies used to create the previous image.

ICM shots are best left to subjects that show contrast, either in color, tone, or texture (or all three), so flowers work well for this strategy.

Try twisting the zoom ring or panning through a colorful group of flowers to create an abstract and unusual image. These shots can be fun, as you often don't know what you will get.

📷 Shooting Assignment: Find two flowers, or a group of flowers, with good color or tonal contrast and shoot them using ICM. Try moving the camera in different ways: a horizontal sweep, a vertical sweep, or small jerky movements.



Image 061 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

*With a shallow DOF
(f14 with a macro lens)
and bright flash, this
everlasting flower's
far petals created a
wonderful bokeh effect.*

BOKEH

I've mentioned bokeh previously when talking about depth of field, but this affect can really make your flower photos pop, and it deserves another mention.

Bokeh, the out-of-focus blobs of light that you get in the background of your photos, can be a very welcome addition to a flower photograph.

Getting some bokeh in the background is relatively easy to accomplish, but you do need a few key ingredients to make it happen.

Firstly, you need a relatively shallow depth of field. If you are using a macro lens, this should be quite easy to achieve.

Secondly, you need to be relatively close to your subject and your background should be farther away.

The other ingredient to getting great bokeh is the nature of the background.

Other flowers, water on vegetation, and light filtered through brush or a tree all create great bokeh; essentially you're looking for bright spots.



Image 062 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Filtered light through a nearby tree created a lovely green bokeh background for these gerbera daisies.

You can move closer and farther away from the background to change the nature of the bokeh, and you can also adjust your aperture.

You will find that your bokeh gets softer as you decrease your f-stop.

An important thing to note is that not all bokeh is created equally, and some can be downright distracting. You want the affect to complement and not overpower your subject, so observe your backgrounds carefully for colors and light that will help flatter your flower.

 **Key Lesson:** Bokeh, the out-of-focus spots of color and light, can be both helpful and harmful to your photos. Check out the background before you start shooting. If it doesn't work, change your perspective or use one of your backgrounds from your kit.

 **Shooting Assignment:** Head outside and create some great bokeh. Choose a subject and some nice vegetation as a background. Want to up the ante? Spray your background with a water hose and see if you can get some sparkling bokeh happening!

HIGH KEY AND LOW KEY

Another way to add interest to your flower photographs is to shoot them using a high- or low-key effect. High and low key are techniques where most of the image is light or dark with purpose. The results can be quite stunning and draw attention to part, or the whole, of your flower in a way that truly makes it stand out.

To achieve a high-key shot, choose a bright or a light-colored background to shoot against.

I like to use the white side of my reflector as a background; alternatively, a white piece of foam core works well.

Set your subject up between you and the background. Then place your flash off to one side, aimed at your background. If you don't have two flashes, you can use a lamp, or even a flashlight to illuminate the white background.

Next, you should set your exposure for the subject. Spot exposure works well in this situation, as it will expose for your subject and the background will remain bright. Using a second flash unit, place it off to one side of your subject to illuminate it. Shoot your image.

I have done this technique using only one flash unit, but you need to be careful of casting shadows onto your background.

You can reduce the likelihood of shadows on the background by placing your subject closer to the camera and angling the flash so that it illuminates your subject and the background at the same time.

It takes a little finessing with one flash unit, but it can work as well as the two-light method mentioned above.



Image 063 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

*High-key images, like
this image, are a great
way to create flower
images that pop.*

Low-key images are considerably easier to create than high-key images, but they are no less impactful.

With a dark background and a thoughtfully placed electronic flash, you can get a dramatic-looking flower image.

Lowering the flash output creates some interesting shadows and highlights only the parts of the flower you want to reveal.



📷 Shooting Assignment: Create your own high- and low-key flower images. Try shooting the same flower with both techniques and see which one you like best.

Image 064 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

With one flash placed off to the side, this image of a dead flower conveys a mood that would be difficult to achieve using standard lighting.



Image 065 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

*It was an easy decision
to convert this image
to black and white,
as the flowers were
already white. I love
the tonal contrast
in this image.*

COLOR VS. MONOCHROME

Most of the photos that I have shared in this guide are colored, and it is easy to see why, as flowers offer a wonderful array of soft pastels and vibrant hues to work with.

However, if you are composing with shape, texture, or tone in mind, you may want to consider using black and white monochrome as an option.

I'll be honest; I usually make this decision in post-production, and sometimes I decide to go with monochrome because something about the colors doesn't work well.

That isn't always the best criteria for determining whether to convert an image to black and white.

When you do choose to use black and white photography the results can be quite stunning.

The thing that I personally love about black and white flower photography is that you just don't see that many of them!



Image 066 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

They can be head turners, because people expect to see color when they see flower photographs.

Play with shooting in black and white, or convert some of your colored images to black and white, and try to get a different sort of flower photo with a monochrome punch.

In Image 066, where the flowers have gone to seed, it was clear in my mind that this would be a black and white photo from the start. The monochrome allows you to really focus on the texture of the filaments and the water drops.



Image 067 – Photograph
by Leanne Cleaveley

I opted for a black and white image (067) of snowdrops mostly because I wanted the focus to be on the repetition of the shape of the two closest flowers. Using black and white eliminated some distracting colors in the nearby vegetation and actually turned it into a nice background that didn't distract from the flowers.



Image 068 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Image 068 was all about the texture of the flower buds and stems. Backlighting and the use of black and white really draw attention to the fuzzy “hairs” of this plant.

 **Key Lesson:** Black and white flower photos can really draw out some different aspects, like shape, tone, or texture, which you might overlook when using color.

 **Shooting Assignment:** Go on a ‘garden walk’ with black and white in mind. You can shoot in black in white or with the intent to change your image to black and white during editing. Look for interesting textures and good tonal contrast in your subjects.



Image 069 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Using complementary colors, or colors opposite each other on the color wheel, can really make your flower images pop.

COLOR

When you *do* use color, you should consider the quality of the colors you are working with.

Flower colors range from softer tones to vibrant hues. You want to be aware of the characteristics of the colors you are shooting and use them to your advantage.

Vibrant colors tend to draw in the eye, so if the flower you are shooting is a soft pastel color, you want to make sure that any other flowers aren't competing for attention. You may need to change your perspective or use one of your backgrounds to eliminate that distraction.

The use of complementary colors is very helpful for getting your flowers to pop. Pairing a purple flower against a background of yellow flowers really makes that flower stand out. Likewise, using color combinations like red and green and blue and orange will help strengthen your composition.

For a different effect, you can try pairing warm colors like red, orange, and yellow together.

Likewise, you can use colors from the opposite side of the color wheel to create a “cool” image.

It all depends on your subject and what you are trying to convey.

The quality of your light can affect how your colors look too, so be sure to set your white balance appropriately. But don’t worry too much, as color can always use a little “tweaking” in post-processing, and it is so easy to do with photo editing software.

I will talk a little more about post-production editing in Chapter 8.

 **Shooting Assignment:** Create a complementary color flower image. Choose your subject and then use a background in a contrasting color to see how your flower pops!

EMBRACE YOUR MISTAKES.

Use the above-mentioned techniques, and any others that you may come across, to improve your flower photographs.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, creativity is a process, and mistakes are also a part of that!

Aren’t we lucky to live in a time where digital cameras exist, and we can simply delete something that didn’t work?

But before you delete those duds, think about what went wrong, and use that information to guide you toward taking better photos the next time.

Use what doesn’t work to teach you what does work. And don’t be afraid to get in there and get your hands dirty. It is all part of the process!

Self-Check Quiz:

1. Two things you can do to help ignite your creative spark are _____ at other people's flower photos or join _____.
2. When shooting ICM, you should choose low light situations or use a _____.
3. A good shutter speed for ICM is _____ or longer.
4. As you _____ your f-stop, your bokeh will get softer.
5. True or False: You must have two flashes to shoot high-key images.
6. _____ colors draw the eye.
7. Give three examples of complementary colors.
8. Use what doesn't work to teach you _____
_____.

07

SETUPS AND PROPS

Whether you are shooting flowers outside, in the field, or taking photos of cut flowers indoors, your setup is very important to help you achieve what you want with your final image.

The great thing about photographing flowers is that you don't need a large studio to shoot, and the equipment you need is fairly easy to pack around with you.

Flowers offer great versatility for where you can shoot.

Many of my outdoor flower photos are taken in my backyard, with the items from my kit that I shared in Chapter One.

Our back deck has nice filtered light from nearby trees, so I will often shoot there as well, using potted or cut flowers and a small table for my setups.

When shooting inside, I set up at our kitchen table.

In this chapter, I am going to share a couple of my favorite setups and then provide you with step-by-step instructions as to how you can achieve these setups in your space.

I'll also share some practical tips and tricks that will help you get great flower images using materials that you already have.

LOW-KEY FLOWER SHOTS

One of my favorite setups for shooting flowers is to photograph them with a nice dark background in a low-key scenario.

This is an approach that can be used indoors or outside, but for the purposes of this step-by-step tutorial, I will share an indoor setup that I use frequently.

Low key is defined as being an image that is predominantly dark, with light cast onto only the parts of the subject that you want to highlight.

The shadows can make for some very interesting shapes and accentuate your subject in ways that full lighting cannot.



Low key suited Image 070, of a gerbera daisy, nicely. The dark lighting scheme, and deep shadows, fit the mood for a wilted flower that's past its prime.

Image 070 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



Image 071 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

I opted for a low-key effect in Image 071 of this gerbera daisy (actually this is the same daisy as Image 071 before it wilted) to help accentuate the flower's layered petals and texture. I like the way the shadows bring out the layers of petals and add depth to the image.

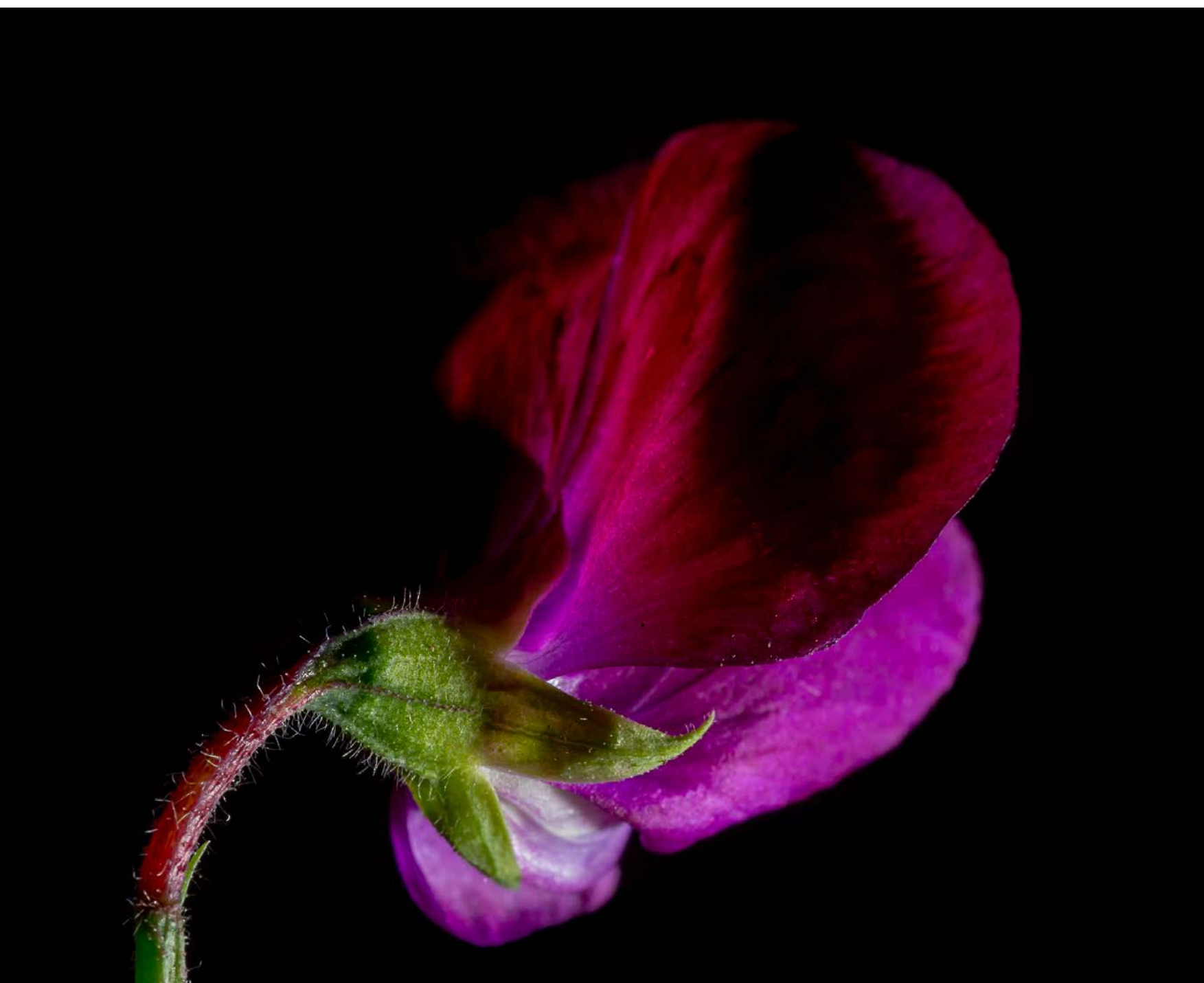


Image 072 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

I chose to keep half of the sweet pea in Image 072 in shadow. I like the unsettling effect it has. The viewer has to fill in the missing pieces. I also like how the right half of the flower and the stem created an S curve in the image.

I often utilize low-key effects in my flower shots, as the images are dramatic and mysterious. They convey a mood that is the opposite to what you often see in flower photography (dark and moody as opposed to bright and light).

Low-key flower photography can also be quite elegant. The black background really highlights the flower, and I like shooting flowers with great textures and interesting shapes in this format.

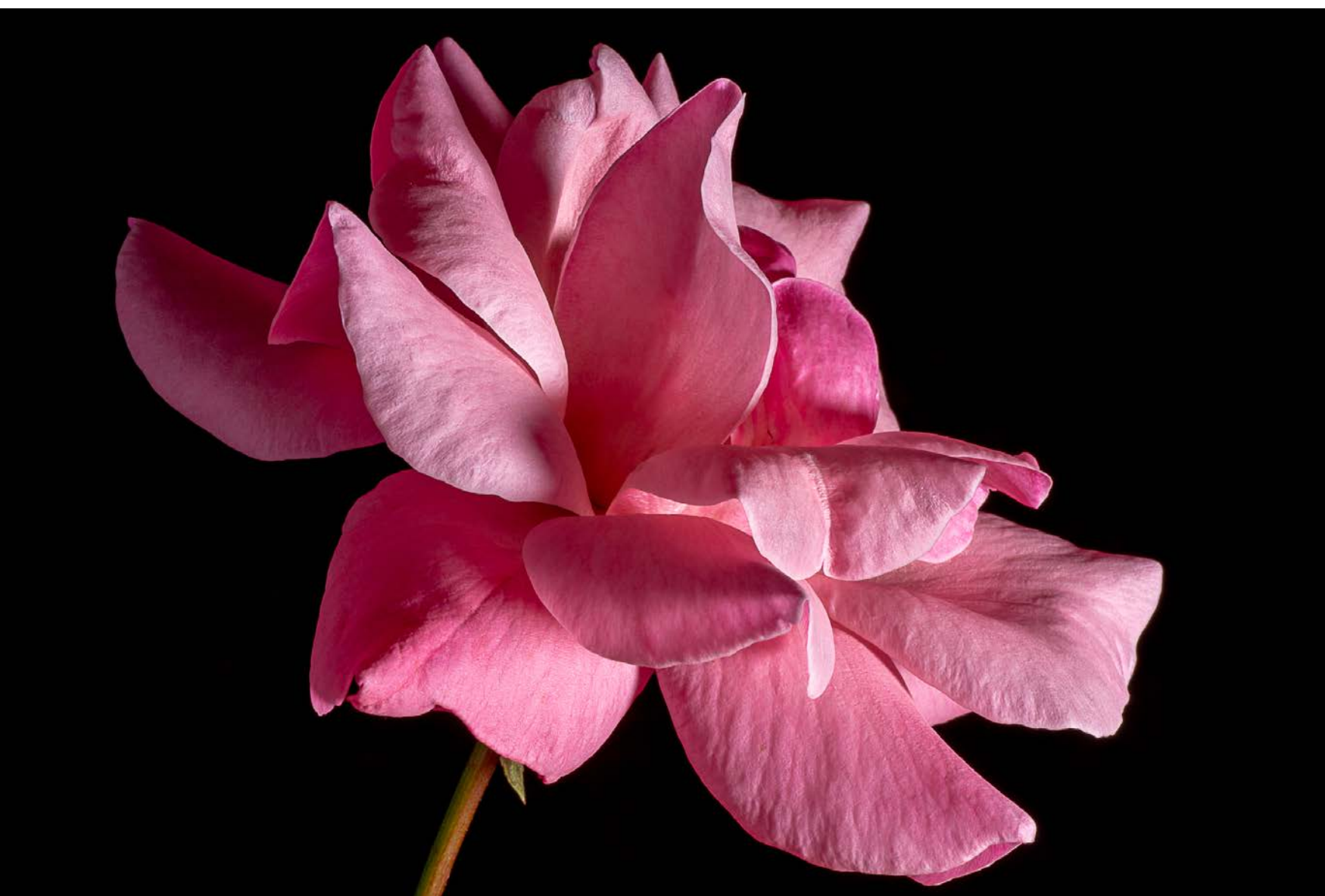


Image 073 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

HOW TO DO IT

I enjoy shooting flowers in all their stages of growth, life, and decay. A wilted flower makes a great subject for this style of photography, so if you have a flower past its prime, photograph it. If not, try to find a flower that has darker colors, as the shadows created will make it more interesting and dramatic.

For the next example, I chose a rose that had wilted in a vase. I used the original rose in its prime, in this earlier shot (Image 073).

When this rose withered, it seemed stooped and hunched, but it still contained some beauty.

I wanted to convey the message that there is beauty at any stage of life through this image of a withered rose.

With that vision in mind, I used this basic setup on my kitchen table:



Image 074 – Photography
by Leanne Cleaveley

If you look at Image 074, you can see the rose was supported in a bowl.

I used a frog (a piece of glass with holes in it for supporting flowers in a bowl or vase) to get the flower into a position that I liked.

 **Key Lesson:** You can find new frogs in flower shops or older ones in thrift stores or at flea markets.

Some are considered collectibles, but to a flower photographer they are simply very useful for moving flowers around and getting them into position.

I used this setup rather than using a vase, because I wanted the stem to be visible in the shot, but I didn't want the vessel containing the flower to be in the shot.

If you look to the background, you will see I have set up my 5 in 1 commercial reflector with the black side facing the camera.

I will sometimes use black foam core for a low-key background if I need a bigger

area of black background.

However, the 5 in1 reflector panel was a perfect size for this shot. You can use anything you have handy, including black velvet material thrown over a chair.

- I started with my electronic flash unit just to the right of the camera and a bit closer to the flower.
- My camera was set up on a tripod.
- My flash was triggered by the in-camera flash.
- I didn't want the in-camera flash lighting onto my set, so I covered it with a piece of cardboard held over the flash by an elastic rubber band. The in-camera built-in flash still triggered the external flash without providing excess light onto my scene.
- I adjusted my camera settings. I started with my ISO set at 100 (I wanted the least light-sensitive setting), and I set my aperture at f22 (I was using my macro lens).
- The aperture was a starting point. I didn't start with a low f-stop, because it would allow too much light in, and that would make it difficult to keep my background completely dark. (You can actually do a quick test shot of *just* the background to ensure that it is black.) If you see anything of the background exposed in the test shot, increase your f-stop until you don't.

All the above steps were done with the room lights on. Once I had synced my flash, set everything up, and focused the shot, I turned the room lights off.

I didn't want any external light sources hitting my subject or the background.

This does NOT require a completely dark room, though, as the small aperture and high-powered flash will help you to expose the shot accurately without any ambient lighting effect.

At this point, I took a few test shots.

After viewing my test shots, I may find that I prefer moving the light more to one side than the other, to highlight certain features.

If you want to raise your flash, and you are working on a table like I am, you can use things you have handy, like stacked books.

I also changed the intensity (power setting) of the flash. I often start at 1/4 power and then bring it up or down a stop or more until I have it where I want it.

In addition, I use my diffuser so that the light from the flash that hits the flower isn't too harsh.

One thing that you should try to avoid is having your flash bounce light off of nearby objects in the room.

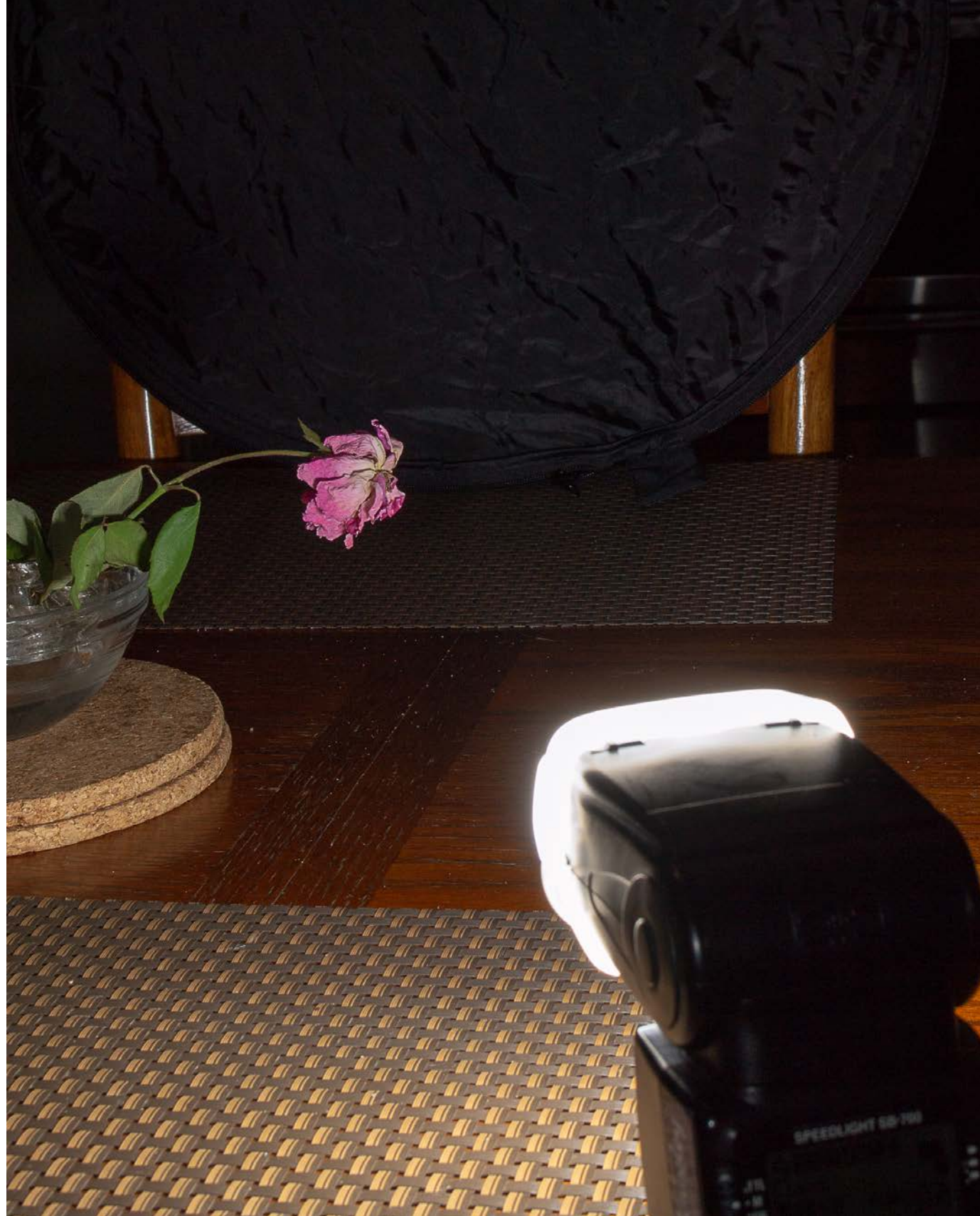


Image 075 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

The basic setup is quite simple, and you don't need loads of space to do this. My kitchen table often acts as a 'studio' for my indoor flower shots. I use the cork pads (seen under the bowl) to raise or lower my subject by adding a pad or taking one away.

Walls, furniture, and other items all have the ability to cast light where you don't want it. If you can identify something that is reflecting light, you can place an object on that side of the flash to block the light, creating your own makeshift "barn doors."

 **Key Lesson:** 'Barn doors' is an industry term for a device that helps to reduce the spread of light from a light source.

You may need to fine-tune your setup by moving the flash. Try it from different angles to see how it changes your image.



Image 076 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

My first test shot (Image 076) told me that I would need to move the flash a bit, as I didn't get the stem highlighted. However, I was really pleased with the focus and how the light brought out the texture of the flower. I moved the flash a bit closer and angled it so that the light would catch the stem. I also moved the camera back a bit to get more of the stem into the shot.



Image 077 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Image 077 was the result of the changes that I made.

At this stage the photo looks a little dark and flat, but remember that is typical for RAW image files.

Don't worry too much about the histogram, as it should be reading to the left for the low-key effect.

Just ensure that the parts of your subject that you want to be seen aren't clipped off into darkness.

Use your eyes to determine if you are getting the flower exposed properly by frequently checking the review.

After a few more shots, I chose to increase the DOF by adjusting my aperture to f/36 and then increasing my flash output accordingly to maintain proper exposure.

Remember that if you increase your f-stop, you will need to increase the amount of light, as the aperture is now smaller.



Image 078 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Also, if you choose to decrease your DOF by lowering your f-stop number, then you will need less light from your flash, as the aperture is bigger and allowing more light into the camera.

💎 Key Lesson: If you decide to change your f-stop – for example to increase your DOF – remember that with a smaller aperture, less light will reach your sensor and you must adjust exposure. For every full increase of your f-stop, you will have to increase your flash by a stop as well. The same is true for the reverse. Any change in aperture requires an offsetting change in another part of the exposure triangle.

Upon reviewing my shots on the computer and making some editing changes, I found that I had two shots from this session that I liked for different reasons. The first was an earlier shot from when I was fine-tuning the DOF and overall setup.

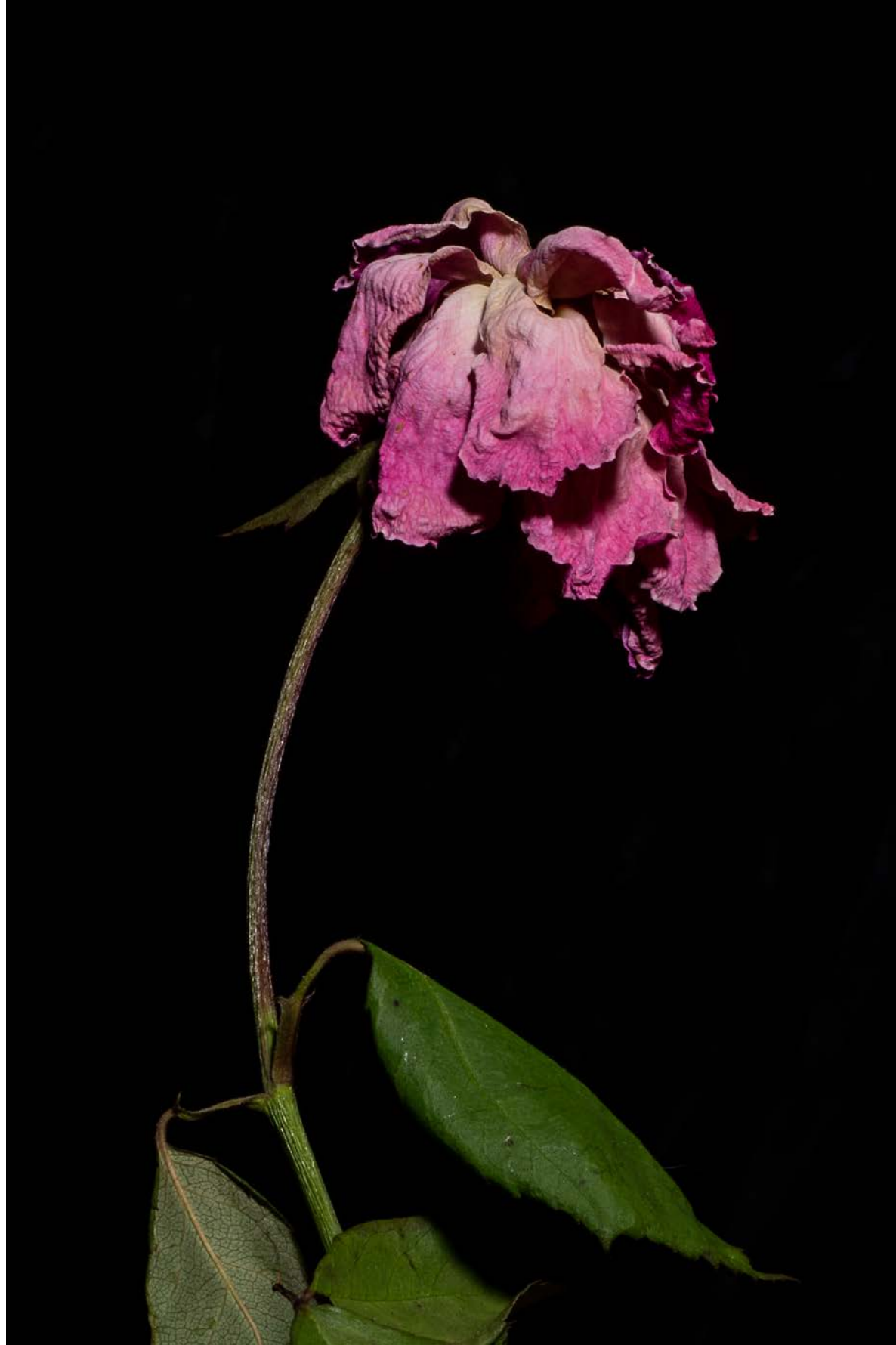


Image 079 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

The other image that I was pleased with was my last shot. Upon editing and reviewing it, I found that by rotating it one turn to the left, I liked it even more. It gave the withered flower a proud look that added to its beauty.

I used to do a lot of “weeding” of my photos in-camera. I strongly discourage you from doing that, unless you know without a doubt that the photo is a dud.

I have learned quite a lot from the photos that I thought were terrible, and sometimes I even find a “gem” among them, as was the case during this shoot.



Image 080 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

BACKLIT FLOWER SHOT

Another technique I love to employ when shooting flower photographs is the use of backlighting.

Backlit photos are great for highlighting the shape of the flower you are shooting, and it can really draw attention to attributes such as texture. It can also create an interesting effect, where the outline of your subject appears to have a bright halo around it.

The light source for the backlit flower in Image 080 was an external flash. I like the way the backlighting showed the hairy texture of the flower and stem, and also the translucent nature of the petals.



The source of backlight for Image 081 was the sun. The shot was taken in late afternoon light. The position of the sun let the shining light pass through the translucent petals, and that also brought out the flower's veins, creating a unique image.

Image 081 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



Image 082 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Backlight was used to create Image 082. The low position of the evening sun highlighted the hairy fibers on the buds, stems, and flower petals.

Backlighting is just as it sounds: you place your subject, and the light source, in such a manner that the subject is lit from the back. Your light source can be the sun, or it can be an artificial source such as an electronic flash. The quality of the light can be direct or indirect.



Image 083 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

HOW TO DO IT

To demonstrate how to achieve a backlit shot, I am going to walk you through a setup that I used.

I had been eyeing some begonias that grew in my shade-loving hanging basket whenever the light shone through their petals.

I thought that they would make an excellent candidate for a backlit image.

For your shot, try to find a flower that has an interesting texture. This texture might be visible in the softness, or the shininess, of the petals. It might also be fine hairy fibers or the veins on the petals.

Look for a feature on the flower that would be best highlighted by backlighting.

The petals of the begonias in my hanging basket (Image 083) had a lovely sparkling shine to them anytime the light shone through them. I decided to try a backlit shot to highlight this interesting feature.



Image 084 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Because the flower that I was shooting was in the shade, I opted to bring the hanging basket down to a table so that I could better position the flowers for a backlit shot. The sun was out, so I decided to use it as my light source.

When setting up your shot, consider what light source you are using. You may want to wait for a sunny day, or you may want to use your electronic flash to create the backlighting.

I positioned my camera, and my tripod, so that I was facing the begonias, with the sun behind them.

It was mid-morning, so I had to angle my tripod and camera slightly below the flowers to achieve proper backlighting.

With my tripod and camera set up just below the flowers, I was shooting (Image 084) at an angle so that I could get the sun behind my subject for this backlit shot.

Things for you to consider:

- Working in manual mode, I set my camera ISO to 100.
 - I started with my aperture at f/25 (I wanted enough depth to get more of the flower in focus) and I set a shutter speed of 1/200th of a second.
 - The sun was behind my subject, **but not directly behind it**, to avoid highlight blowouts (clipping) and to help expose the flower properly.
 - My first shot was a test to see how the backlighting worked on my flowers.
- You will have to decide whether you want direct or indirect light hitting the back of your subject.
 - If you are using the sun, you can filter the light a bit by shooting in an area that has other vegetation.
 - If you are using your flash, you may want to move it a bit so that it isn't directly behind your subject, especially if you don't want your subject to photograph as a silhouette.
 - If you choose to use direct light, be aware that your subject may become a silhouette, especially if your light source is very bright.

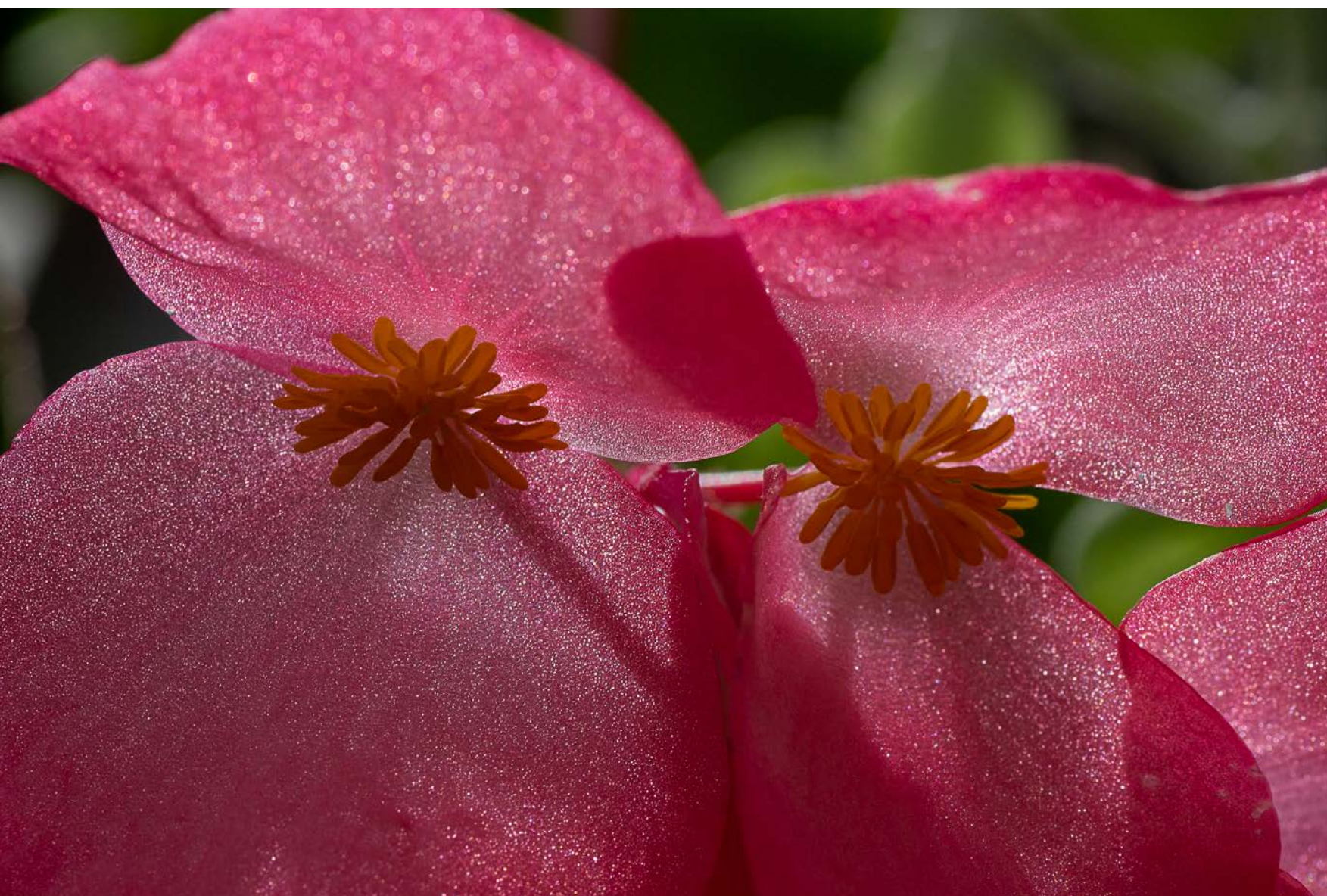


Image 085 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

My first test shot showed me that the backlight had the effect on the petals that I was looking for. But I noticed that the stamens of the flower were quite dark.

My first shot told me that the backlight would work to show the texture of the petals, but that I was going to have to do something to brighten the sepals of the flower, as they were lost in shadow.

I had a couple of options to try and bring out some of the details from the center of the flower.

I could use the in-camera flash, but because I was shooting with my macro lens and close to the subject that light wouldn't reach the flowers.

I decided to try my Speedlight electronic flash. I set it up just underneath the lens at ¼ power. It exposed the sepals but I lost the effect of the backlight because my flash overpowered the backlighting.

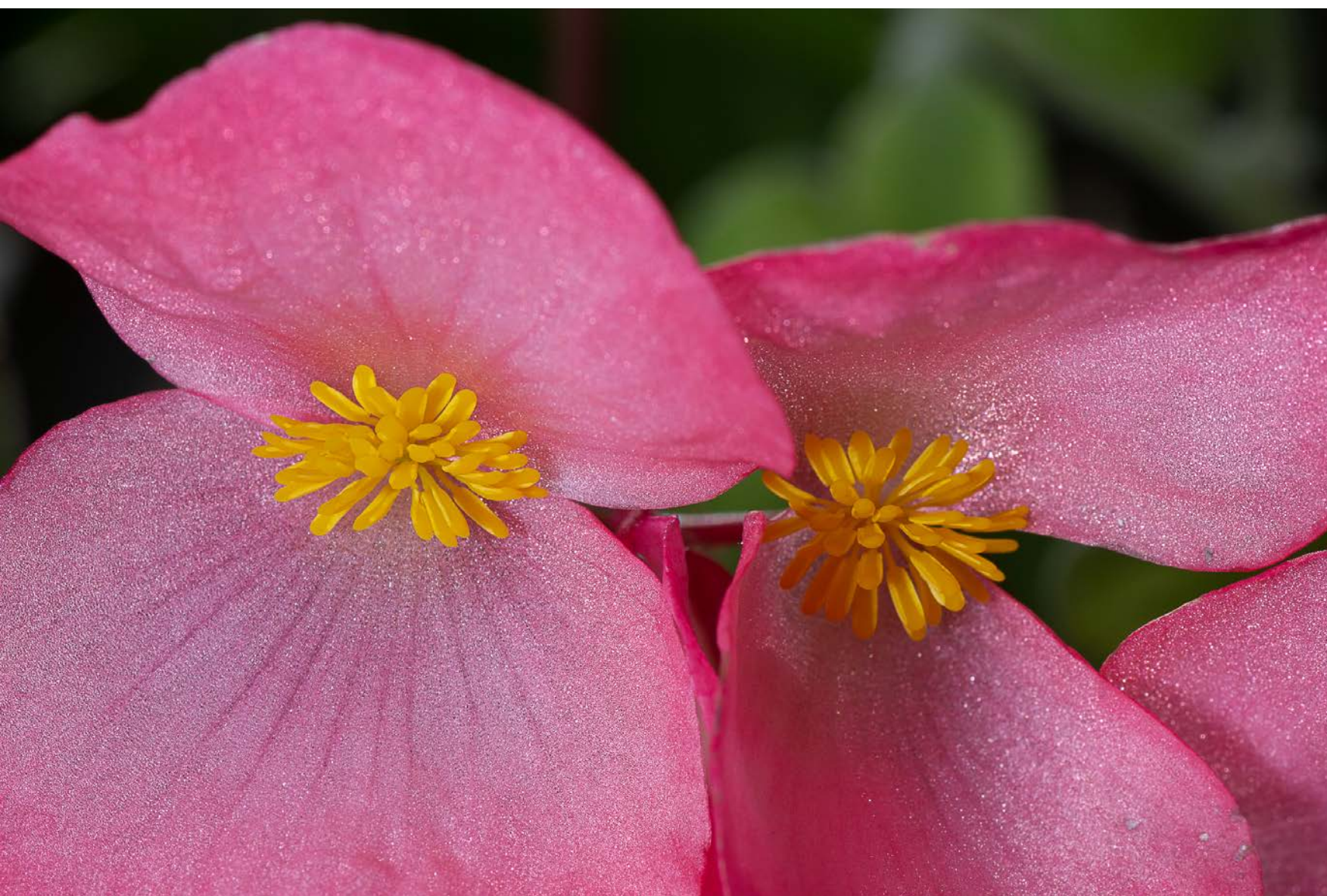


Image 086 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Use of the external flash in this image helped me brighten the center of the flower, but the front lighting was too overpowering, and I lost the effect of the backlighting.

I tried a few more test shots at lower output levels from my flash, and I even moved it farther away from the subject.

I also tried using my reflector to bounce some light back onto the flower instead of using the electronic flash.

 **Key Lesson:** Depending on the effect that you are trying to achieve with your image, you may need to use some front fill light to properly expose your subject (when shooting with backlighting). You have a few options, including the in-camera flash, an external flash, or a reflector.



Image 087 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

By placing the reflector below my subject, I was able to bounce some light back up at the flower and bring out some of the details that were in shadow.

Eventually, I found a shot, using the flash, which had a good balance of backlight with just enough fill light to expose the center of the flower.

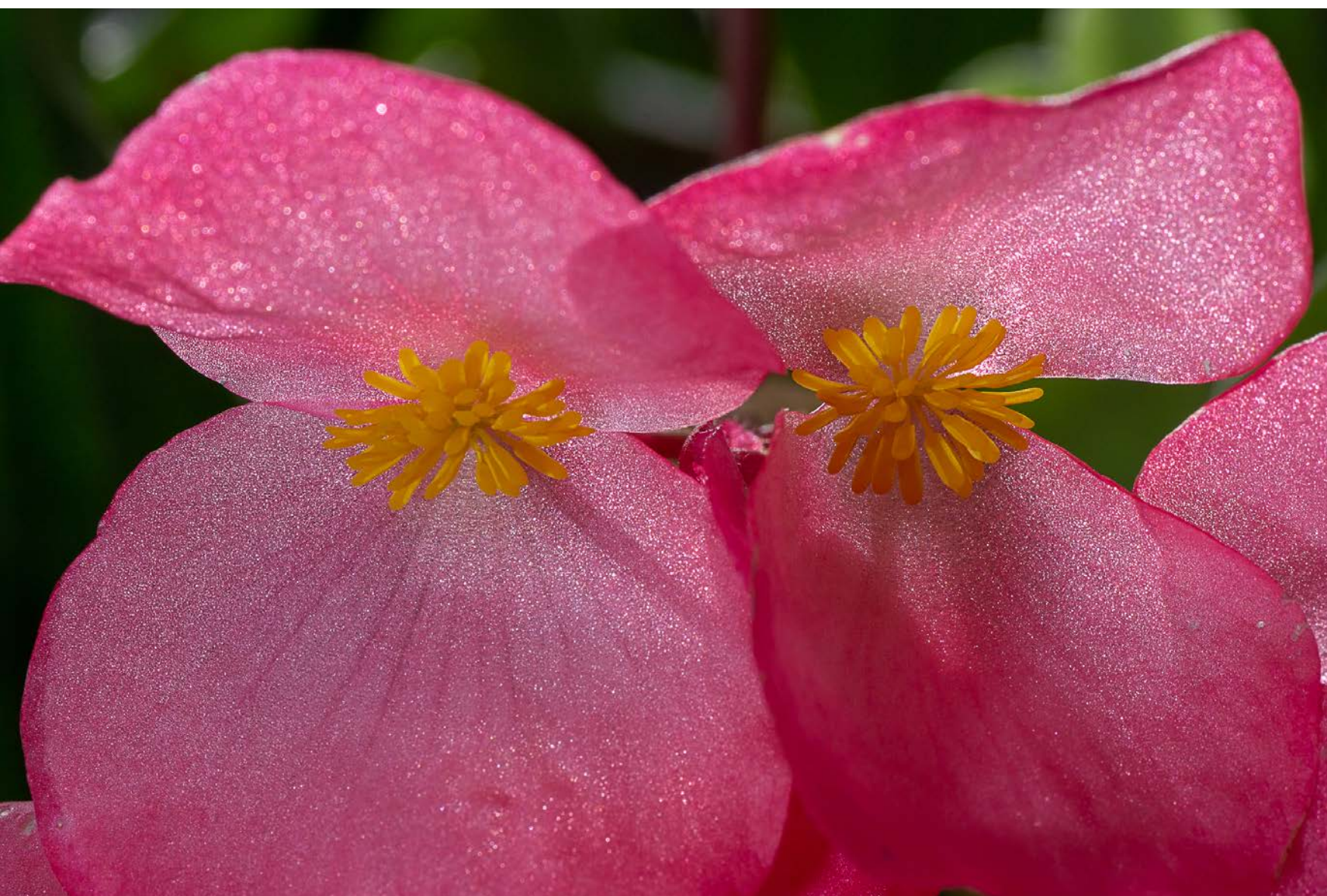


Image 088 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

I was pleased with the balance of backlight and front fill light that I achieved with the flash in Image 088. Now I had a good reference for how to shoot the begonias with backlight.

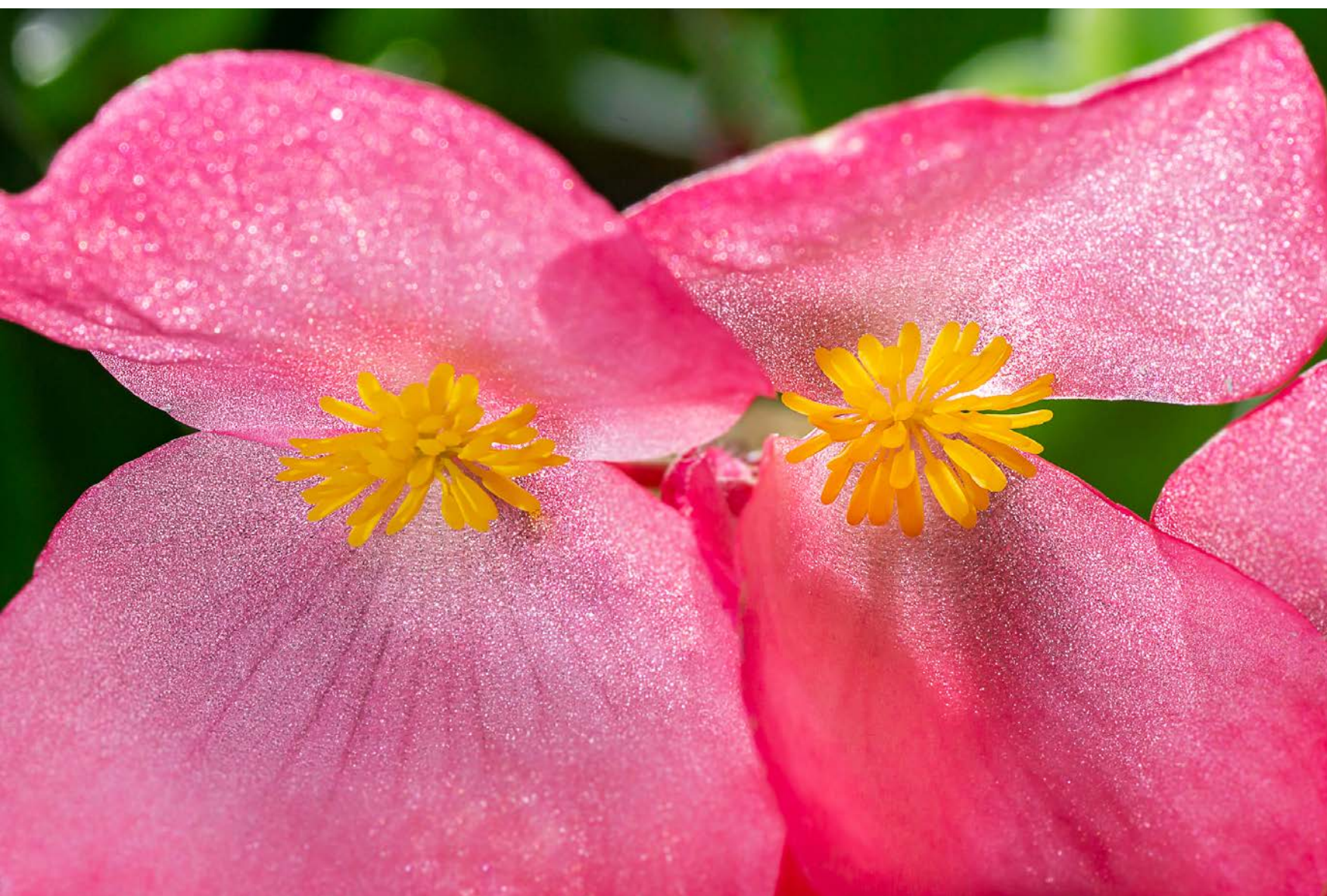


Image 089 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

After a bit of editing, the final image showcased the begonias succulent petals with their unique texture. Backlight was the only way to achieve this shot.

💎 **Key Lesson:** Shooting with backlight can be a great way to draw out the characteristics of a flower that you normally wouldn't have noticed with traditional lighting. Utilize this technique to create interesting flower images that stand out.



Image 090 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

In this scenario, my prop was a book.

PROPS

If you want to take your flower photos to another level, try using some “props” from around your house.

Props are a great way to take your flower shots from common to unique, in a fun and creative way.

You can find things other than vases to showcase your flowers, or you can take it a step further and put your flowers in something really different.

In place of a vase you might use a mason jar, a watering can, an old rubber boot, or a teacup.

Alternatively, you can lay your flower on something. Just remember to work quickly, as it won't take long for your flower to wilt.

Here are a few fun shots using unusual props (Images 090–093):



Image 091 – Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

The prop helped inspire my black and white monochrome treatment.



Image 092 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley
This prop helped me to establish a color scheme.

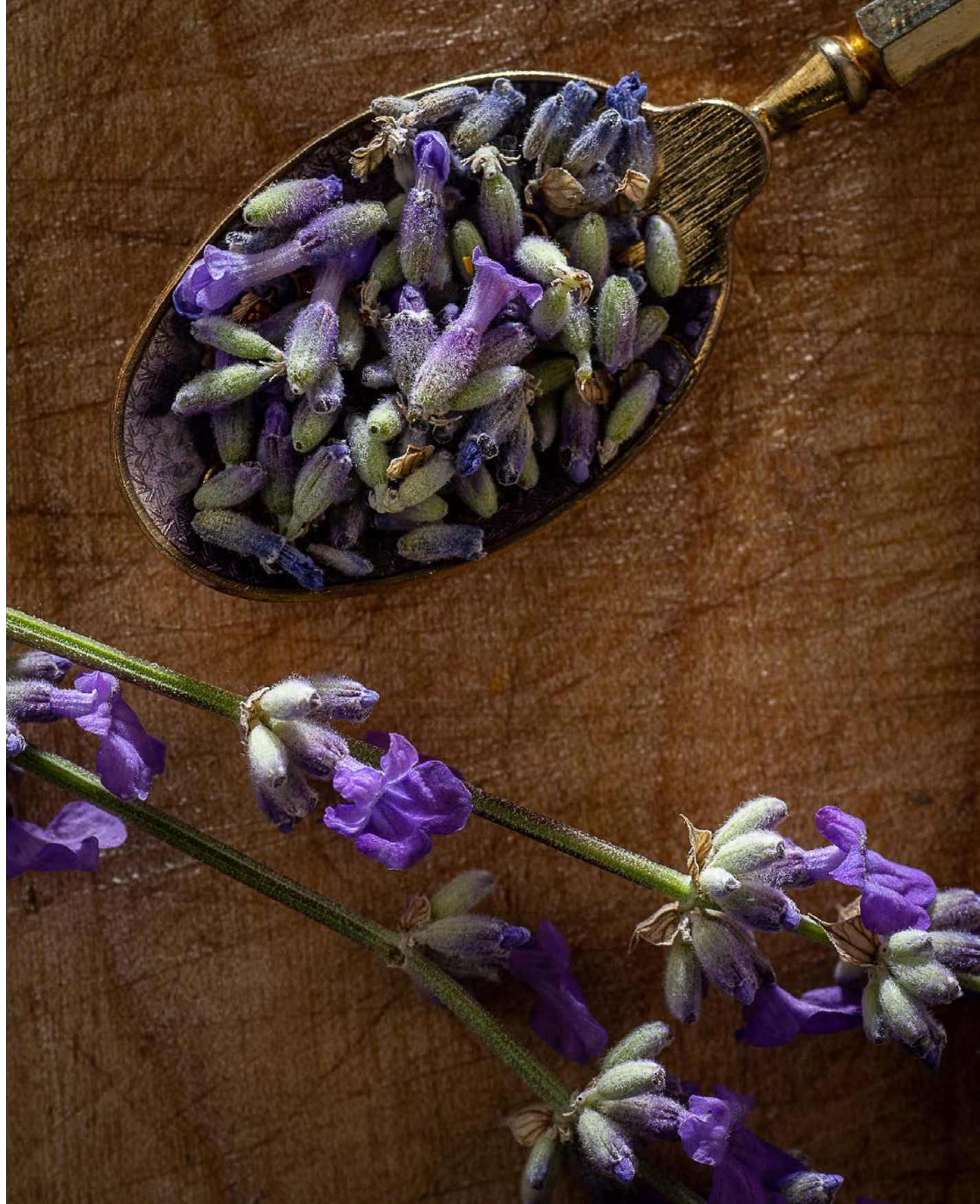


Image 093 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Keep in mind that when you are using cut flowers, you need to work quickly, especially if you are shooting them out of water.

Try to have a clear vision for shots where you will work with flowers in this way. Get all of your materials ready first, and have your camera settings tested (use a test flower) and ready to go. The final flower will be the last element that you add.

Another cool prop for getting creative with your flower images is to add something reflective.

Water, windows, mirrors, and smooth surfaces can all reflect an image.

Try creating a symmetrical image with that reflection, or play with the reflection to get a really interesting composition.



Image 094 was created using the top of my laptop. The nice reflective surface is great for making mirror images. I flipped this image one turn to the left in post-production so that the flower and its reflection looked like they were dancing.

Image 094 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley



Image 095 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Image 095 is another reflection in my laptop. You can use a variety of materials that you find around your house to get reflected images.

One of my favorite “props” for flower shots is water.

There is no denying that flower shots with water make people stop and take a closer look.

You can wait for a rainy day or sprinkle some water on the flowers yourself.

If you want to add just a drop, use a medicine dropper or straw. A well-placed drop of water can turn a mediocre flower photo into a **“wow”** flower photo.



Image 096 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Head outside after the rain to catch shots like this sweet pea image.



Image 097 – Photography by Leanne Cleaveley

The water on this flower was put there with a medicine dropper.



Image 098 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

A single drop of water, as seen in this image, can become a focal point for your flower masterpiece. By moving around, you can get some very interesting images due to refraction within the drop. Here, you are actually seeing the flower's stamens refracted in the water drop.

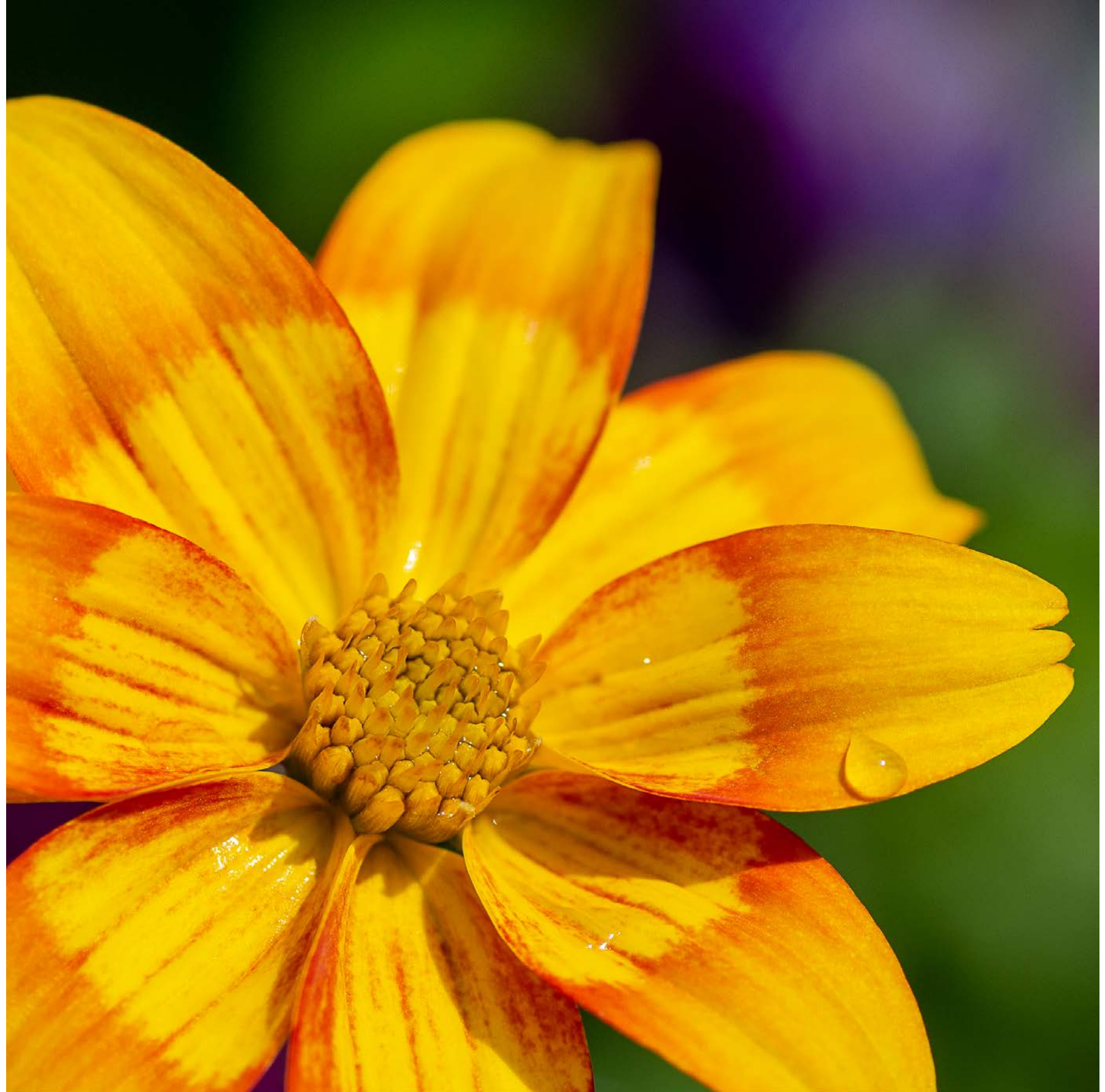


Image 099 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

*I love walking through the garden
with my camera after watering
it. You will often find water
drops clinging to the flowers.*

Self-Check Quiz:

1. True or False: You need a large space, like a studio, for great flower images.
2. Choose one: When shooting low-key images, you should avoid **high/low** f-stops to prevent exposing your background.
3. Name two things that you have in your home that would make good dark backgrounds.
4. What can you do if your flash is casting unwanted light onto your background?
5. For every full f-stop that you increase your aperture, you must increase your Speedlight _____ stop, and vice versa.
6. You can use direct or _____ light when shooting backlit images.
7. What are some ways to soften the light when creating a backlit shot?
8. Name three ways that you can create fill light when shooting with backlight.

 **Shooting Assignment:** Make a list of at least seven items around your house that you think would make good props for flower images that you want to create. Each day of the week, shoot using one of the props from your list.

08

EDITING AND PRINTING YOUR PHOTOS

When it comes to editing, my hope is always that I got it right enough in the camera that there is very little to do.

However, if you are shooting in the camera RAW format, as I recommended, then there is always *something* to do.

With all of the important data that camera RAW files contain, these shots will look flat when viewed straight out of the camera and unprocessed.

I am going to talk about the steps that I use to edit a photo in Lightroom, as that is my preferred program.

However, most of the tools that I use in Lightroom are available in other editing software, so please don't feel that you need a particular editing program to get this done. It is the steps, not the program, which will improve your photo.

I have a step-by-step process that I go through every time I edit my images, and then there are some "troubleshooting" steps that I may make if I need to alter a photo in a specific way.

First, I will walk you through the basic steps that I take to edit my flower photos right out of the camera.



Image 100 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

THE BASICS

To better show you how I process my images, I am going to use one of my images as an example. Image 100 is of a brown-eyed Susan (with a special guest), as it looked straight out of the camera. This is the initial image unedited.

Working in the develop module of Lightroom, you have a variety of tools at your disposal.

There are sliders to change the white balance, tone, exposure, contrast, and other features.

The first thing that I do is pop down to Lens Corrections and tick off the two boxes there for my lens type. This fixes any distortion or a possible vignette specific to the type of lens that you use.

The next thing I look at is whether I want to do any cropping.

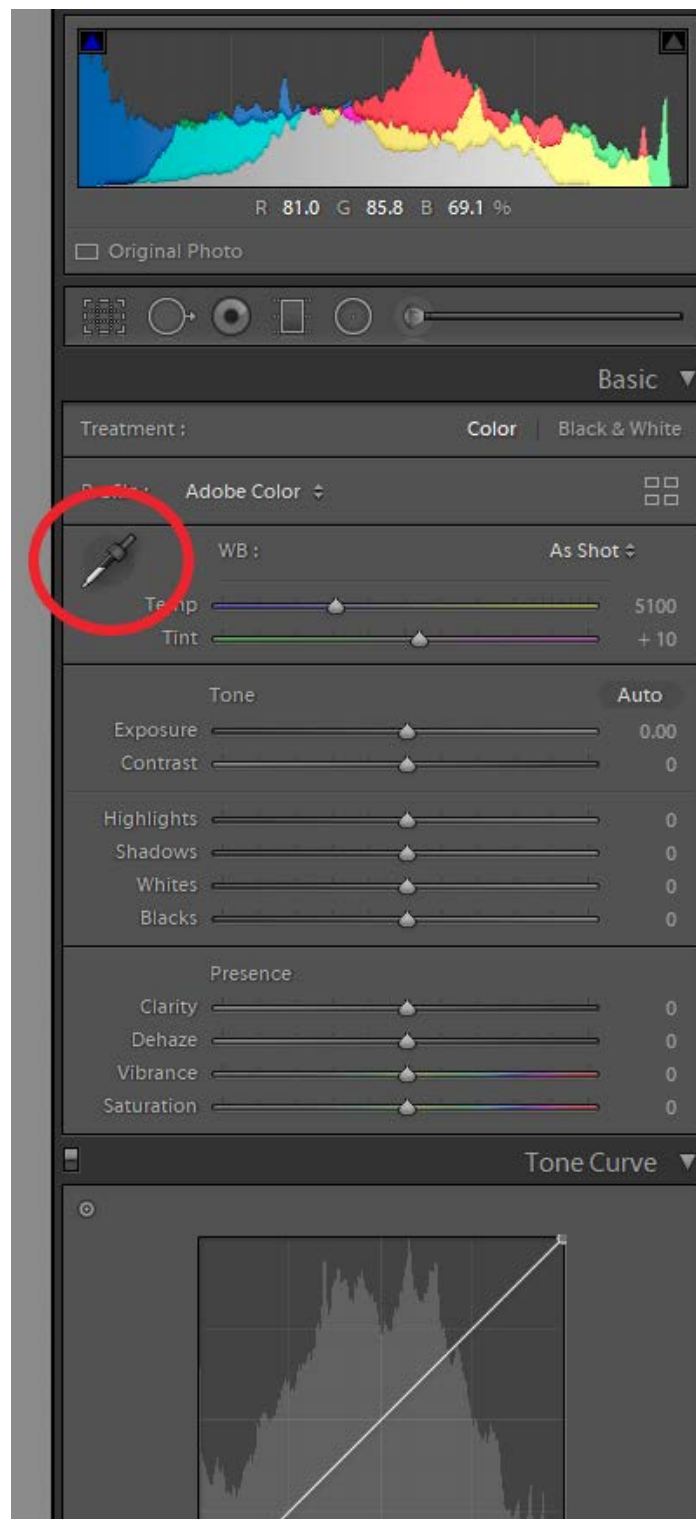


Image 101

This photo wasn't planned very well, as I saw the bug in the flower and quickly recomposed my shot so that the bug was sharp. I paid little attention to anything else.

I decided to use a 5x7 frame and cropped the image down to just around the flower with just a little of the background leaf showing (I liked how it "pointed" to the flower).

The next step is to look at my white balance.

I usually set my white balance manually when shooting, but it is always good to recheck it.

The day that I shot this, the sun was popping in and out of the clouds, and I had to remember to change the white balance each time that happened.

I decided to use my White Balance Selector to find a neutral target, as the right-hand side had some good grey background to work with. This really helped make the colors in the image truer to what I saw.

Image 101 shows the White Balance Selector (in Lightroom) circled in red. This tool is helpful if your colors seem off. Simply find a neutral target in your image and click on that spot with the tool. Lightroom will make the adjustments for you. If you still don't like the colors, you can use the sliders to make more adjustments.

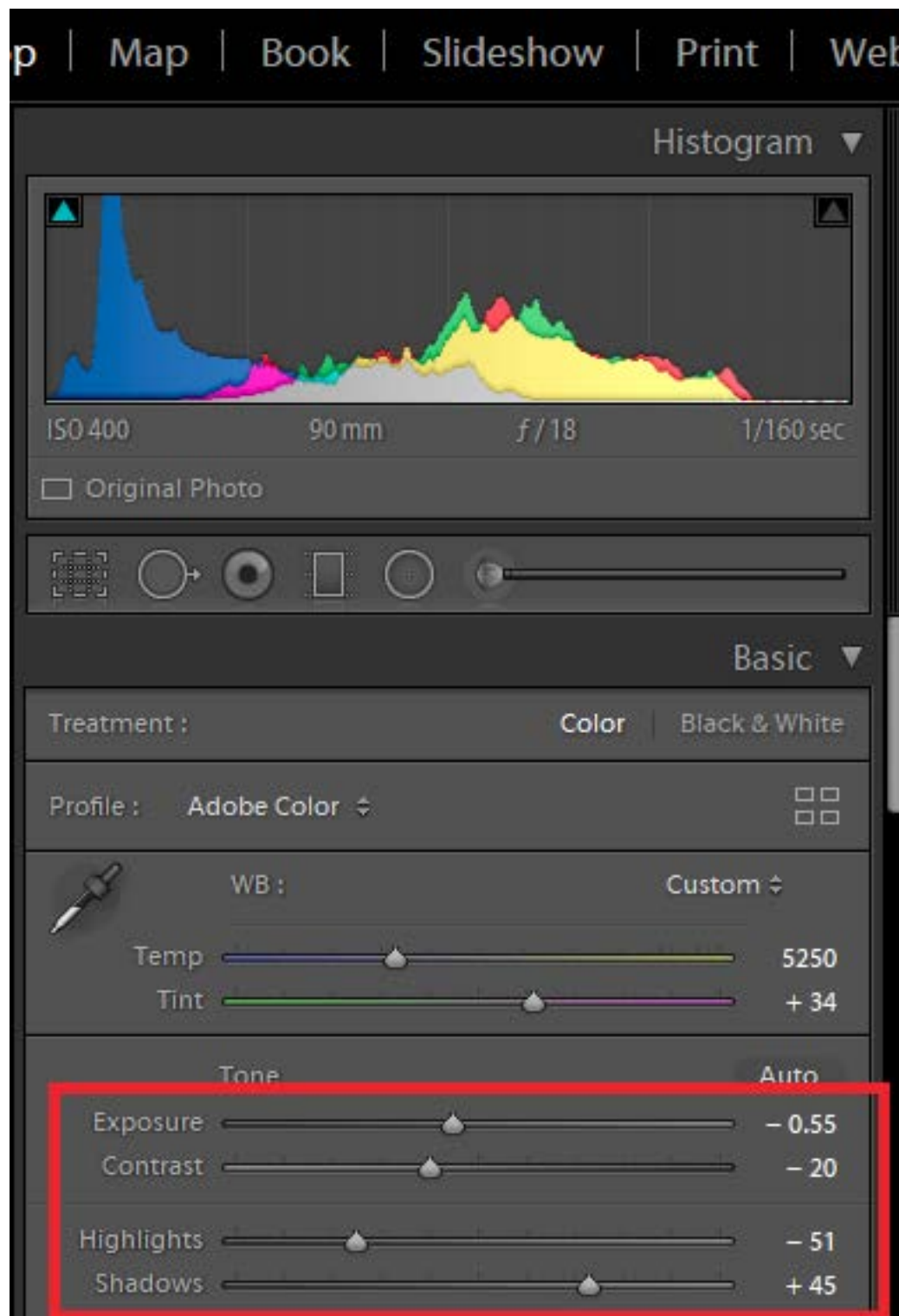


Image 102

The tone adjustments are very important tools for post-processing as they are going to really make an image stand out. I often bring my exposure up a bit, as RAW images tend to appear dark.

However, in this case, I needed to bring the exposure down a bit to help properly expose those yellow petals. You can play with the slider to see what you prefer. Move it up to lighten your image or slide it back to darken it. It really depends on how you want your final image to look.

The tone adjustments, shown in Image 102, are important tools for helping your image to stand out. Use the sliders to increase or decrease the effect on your image.

Contrast is another tool that will depend on the final look you are going for.

I decreased the contrast a bit for this image as it creates a soft, muted look that works well for this flower.

Often, I will play with pulling it much higher or lower than I would ever want to set it, just to see how it affects my photo overall.

Another change that I made was to drop the highlights down quite a bit. This can be helpful for bringing out detail in bright spots. Shadows weren't a huge issue in this photo, so I lifted them just a little.

The first thing I do when adjusting the black and white values is to check for clipping, or spots where there is so much black or so much white that information or detail is lost.

 **Key Lesson:** The easiest way to check white and black values in Lightroom is to hold the alt (option for Apple) key down while clicking the slider tool. For white, the image will appear black except for where there is clipping, and this will show as white. When checking for black, most of the image will appear white, and spots where there is clipping will show as black. Pull your slider up or down to adjust appropriately.

I only altered the black and white moderately in this flower photo.

If you want lots of contrast, you can be a little more brazen with the sliders. Just watch for clipping as you don't want to lose those details that make your image look sharp.

I'm a bit of a sucker for the clarity slider, I will admit.

In this case, I wanted to enhance the clarity of the bug and the center of the flower. But the slider applies the setting to the whole photo, and I didn't really want those soft yellow petals

getting sharpened. In a moment, I'll show you how I can fix the petals from the global clarity setting.

After increasing my clarity and skipping the dehaze slider for this photo (I love the dehaze tool for backlit shots and shots taken into the sun!), I am left with two more tools.

The vibrance and saturation tools are particularly important for color flower photos. Again, what you do with them will depend on how you want your final image to appear.

I found at this point in the editing that the color looked a little oversaturated to my eye.

I see lots of flower photos that are overdone as far as colors go. I tend to be a moderate and I aim to keep my colors true.

So, I pulled back on the Saturation slider a bit and bumped up the vibrance.

Vibrance only affects the more muted colors in your photo and I find minimal adjustments of this slider can nicely enhance the color in your flower images specifically.

 **Key Lesson:** If you look at flower photos online, you will see many oversaturated shots where the color looks unnatural. Play with the extremes on the slider to see what increasing and decreasing the saturation will do, but aim for a natural look, unless you have a specific purpose for doing otherwise.

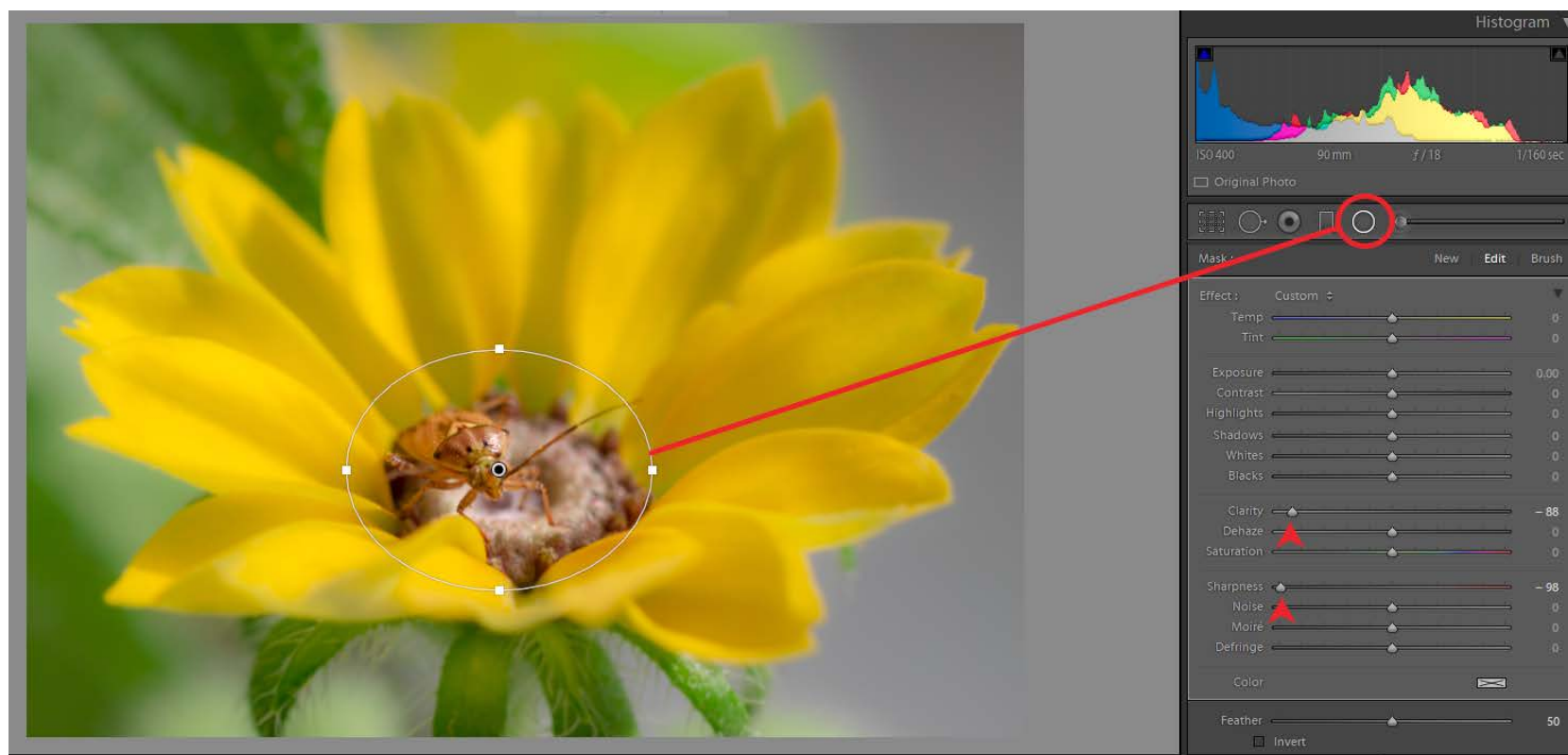


Image 103

BEYOND THE BASICS

One of my favorite tools for editing flowers is the **Radial Filter** in Lightroom. This tool allows you to draw a circle or oval around a part of the image, masking that area, so that you can make changes to the area outside of it.

Remember that I said I didn't really want to bump up the clarity too far on the whole photo?

Well, this is the neat part, because I used my Radial Filter to draw a circle around the center of the flower and the bug. Then I slid my Clarity and Sharpness sliders way down, decreasing the effect of both. The result is that the bug and middle of the flower remain sharp, but the petals and the rest of the image are a soft, dreamy blur.

Image103 shows how you can use the Radial Filter to apply a mask to part of the photo and make changes to the unmasked area. In this case, I kept the bug and the center of the flower sharp, while decreasing clarity and sharpness in the area outside of the mask.



Image 104

Finally, while looking at the resulting image, I decided that I didn't like the small "blip" of green under the petals on the right-hand side of the image.

I used the Heal tool to eliminate this piece of leaf so that it wouldn't distract from the rest of the image.

I often use the Heal tool to remove pieces of pollen or dirt that show up on the flower petals in my images.

Image 104 shows the Heal tool and where I applied it to this image. Zoom in close when working with this tool as it will give you more control over the changes you are making.

Some of the changes I made are quite subtle, but when you put all of those changes together, the final image looks quite different from the one I began with.



Image 105

Image 105 shows how just a few editing basics can really help your photo stand out. The left image is the 'before' version, and the right image is the 'after' version.

THE NEXT STEP: PRINTING

You've got a fabulous flower image, you took the time to edit it, and now you want to print it.

Printing images has become easy and accessible for many people nowadays.

Some photographers have their own printers, and they can print their images easily at home.

Many photo centers give the option of creating large prints as well.

I hear a lot of people complain that their colors don't look right when they print their photos.

The first step to ensuring that your colors are "true" is to make sure that what you are seeing on your computer screen is accurate.

Take the time to calibrate your monitor, using hardware specifically designed to do so.

This will ensure that what you see is what you will actually get when you print.

Another factor that you should consider is the brightness of your screen. The brightness of your monitor can affect the way your photo appears on the screen.

If it is set to a very bright setting, you may drop the exposure in a photo and then find that it looks too dark when you print it.

You can adjust your monitor's brightness easily in your computer settings, and part of the monitor calibration process is setting the brightness.

⚠ Key Note: If you want your prints to look like what you are viewing on your screen, ensure that your monitor is color calibrated and that your screen is adjusted for brightness.

You will want to consider the type of paper you will be printing to as well. Most editing software will provide an option to save your photo for a particular medium – glossy or matte – and make the necessary adjustments to ensure your photo looks its best.

Finally, consider what size you are printing your image and ensure that you have the right pixels per square inch (PPI) to have the right photo resolution to make your image look great.

300 PPI is typically a good resolution for printing at most sizes, and your editing software will allow you to adjust your photo dimensions, in pixels, to achieve this.

Because large prints are often viewed from further away, you can actually get away with fewer PPIs with those images.

I strongly encourage you to print your images, as there is nothing like being able to enjoy your own artwork. You may find yourself quickly running out of real estate in the form of empty walls as you get into printing more!

Self-Check Quiz:

1. When adjusting white balance in your photo, you can use the _____ tool to choose a neutral target and let the program adjust it for you.
2. The radial filter acts as a _____, allowing you to make changes to parts of the image outside of it.
3. True or False: You can use the Highlight slider to decrease the effect of highlights in your photo, allowing you to bring out more detail in bright spots.
4. Which tool is helpful for removing unwanted spots, like pollen or dirt, in your photograph?
5. When it comes to printing your images, be sure to _____ your monitor and adjust its brightness to ensure that what you print is true to what you see.
6. Hold the alt key down while clicking on the slider to check for _____.

 **Assignment:** Take one of your flower photos and work through the editing steps outlined above. Choose one that you feel was only “so-so” out of the camera and see if you can use the editing tools to make it pop!

CONCLUSION



Image 106 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Although this is the end of this guide for shooting fabulous flower images, I hope that it is the beginning of you getting outstanding flower photos.

The assignments were created to give you some practice developing the skills and concepts covered.

Work through all of them or pick out the ones that you feel will help you most.

The important thing is to get out there and shoot.

Getting great flower photographs isn't just about being a good photographer technically or having artistic talent; it is about using all of the things that you know and putting them into practice.

Understanding light, composition, visualizing and setting up a shot, editing, and being able to use your camera to its fullest potential all play a key role in creating images that are memorable.

Finally, don't forget to let your creative side play a little bit. It is through playing with different techniques and allowing yourself to dabble that you will find those really special images.

Happy shooting!
Leanne



Image 107 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

Self-Check Quiz:

1. Shooting flowers that grow low to the ground can be a pain in the back. What are some things you can do to make it easier?
2. What are some techniques that you can utilize to help viewers zoom in on the part of the image you want them to?
3. What considerations should you make, with respect to camera settings (aperture, ISO, etc.) and your subject, when shooting ICM?
4. _____ colors are opposite each other on the color wheel and the use of these colors can really make your flower images pop.
5. If you are using cut flowers, you need to work _____ so that the flowers look fresh in your photographs.
6. Other than using a flash, what are some ways that you can get more light onto your subject?
7. Use of black and white can lead to some really interesting flower photos. What made the image on the previous page (Image 107) a good candidate for black and white?
8. True or False: What you see on your monitor is what you will get when printing.
9. What are some tools that can help you get water into your flower photographs?
10. Is the light in the image on the next page (Image 108) warm or cool? What kind of light source do you think was used? How does the placement or direction of light affect the flower's texture?



Image 108 – Photograph by Leanne Cleaveley

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Leanne Cleaveley is a hobby photographer, part-time elementary school teacher, and full-time mother and wife. She loves reading, gardening, crafting, and music – and contemplates ways to find more time in the day to pursue her hobbies. Her photographs can be found on [Flickr](#).

Congratulations! You've completed this Photzy guide!

If you've found this flower photography tutorial helpful, check out this premium guide on how to create gorgeous, creamy, blurry backgrounds: [Beautiful Background Blur](#).



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