

LESSON 4
Macro & Flower Photography

25 Beautiful Macro Shots

<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2008/09/21/25-beautiful-macro-photography-shots-photos/>

Get Up Close with Floral Photography

http://www.blacksuniversity.com/Customer/PhotoTutorial_TP103.aspx

Floral photography is one of the most popular forms of photography. And no wonder, with more than 3,500 species of flora native to Canada, not to mention hundreds of other species that are imported and cultivated here, you have a vast array of subjects to choose from. There are several approaches you can take to photographing flowers. You may want to:

- Photograph flowers growing in the wild
- Photograph flowers that are cultivated in gardens and greenhouses
- Photograph cut flowers and arrangements indoors.

Each of these types of photography has a unique set of challenges. In this tutorial, we'll focus mostly on flowers growing in the wild, and in gardens and greenhouses.



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What is macro photography?

The most common way of photographing flowers out of doors is close-up or macro photography. In the past, macro photography meant using SLR cameras and buying special lenses that cost anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars. But digital cameras changed that. As a matter of fact, most point-and-shoot digital cameras come with a built-in macro feature that makes them extremely attractive, even to professional photographers.

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Macro mode lets you get extremely close to your subject, usually in the range of 10-20 cm or less. Some cameras let you get even closer, as close as 1-4 cm. Consult your camera's manual to determine its macro range.

The ability to get so close to an object has its advantages, but it also has its limitations.

One of these limitations is very narrow depth of field. Depth of field is the distance in front of and behind your subject in which objects remain in focus. In macro mode, this distance is very short. As a result, a lot of the picture is blurred, but you can use this limitation to focus all the attention on the subject to create spectacular photographs.

The other limitation, increased exposure time, is more of a problem, but it is not insurmountable. Exposure time is how long your camera's shutter has to stay open in order to take the photograph. Because your camera's aperture is so small in macro mode, your camera needs more time to take a picture, and therefore it can't "freeze" motion as well as it would at lower exposure times. If a breeze disturbs the flower you are photographing or your hand is unsteady, you will get a blurry picture.

Set your camera to macro mode

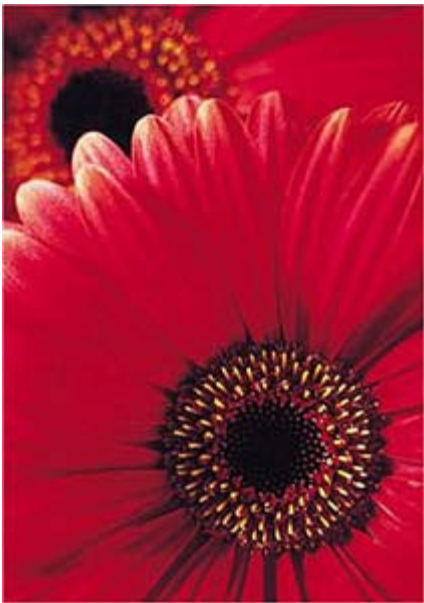
Before you start taking pictures, make sure to set your camera to macro mode. Consult your camera's manual if you don't know how. Once you've finished your flower pictures, make sure to switch off macro mode, otherwise your other pictures will be blurry. Consult your camera's manual to find out how to set it to macro mode. On some cameras, macro mode is a setting of its own, like portrait, landscape, sports, etc., and is found on the same dial as other shooting modes. On other cameras, it is a complementary setting, activated by another button, and used in addition to standard picture modes. If the latter is true of your camera, your best option is to use portrait mode in conjunction with macro mode to photograph flowers up close.

Photographing flowers outdoors

Be patient. Wait for the wind or breeze to die down before you snap a picture. Take your time and take several pictures. Your patience will be rewarded with an outstanding and sharp image.

Photographing flowers in nature - Mind the sun

Whether you're taking pictures in a garden or of wild flowers in nature, bright but overcast days are best for flower photography. This is because clouds diffuse sunlight resulting in softer colours and fewer shadows. If you do shoot on cloudless days, shoot when the sun is low in the sky, that is, in the hours just after sunrise or just before sunset. Shooting at these times will result in warmer colours, as well as in shadows and highlights that are easier to manage. Keep in mind that using your camera's built-in flash so close to your subject is not a good idea as it will overexpose your image; and some digital cameras disable the built-in flash entirely in macro mode.



Be careful of the wind

Breezes and sudden gusts of wind can make it difficult to photograph flowers, especially when you are shooting up close. A good way to minimize the effect of such a breeze is to stand between the flower and the wind. Be patient. Wait for the wind or breeze to die down before you snap a picture. Take your time and take several pictures. Your patience will be rewarded with an outstanding and sharp image.

Get up close

Kneel or crouch if you have to. Make sure your subject fills the entire frame. And don't just think in terms of a single flower. Pull back a few centimeters to get the flower and its stem in the picture. You may also want to get several flowers in the shot. Just remember that odd-numbered groupings work best: 3 or 5 flowers are more visually appealing than 2 or 4 flowers.

Watch for shadows

Be careful not to cast a shadow over the flower you are photographing. Also make sure that no surrounding objects—such as trees, other plants, buildings, fences or lampposts—cast shadows on your subject either.

Use a tripod

A tripod steadies your camera and reduces the chance that you'll get a blurry image because of the longer exposure time required for macro photography. You can also use your tripod to position your camera low to the ground, so you don't have to crouch, get on your knees or lie on your stomach to get a picture.

Choose your background carefully

Even though your camera automatically focuses on your subject and makes its surroundings blurry, if the background is too similar in colour and texture to the foreground, your subject will have little visual appeal and will blend into its surroundings, making for a dull photograph.

Respect the environment

Obey all rules and regulations. Be careful where you walk to avoid trampling endangered species and damaging fragile ecosystems. Do not pick flowers in public places, parks or wildlife preserves. Respecting nature means leaving it intact for your fellow citizens to enjoy.

Photographing flower gardens

Whether it's your own garden, or a public garden such as your town's botanical garden, you can use the same macro photography techniques to take pictures of cultivated flowers as you would wildflowers. Also, flowerbeds in tended gardens have an additional charm of their own and you may want to switch from macro to landscape mode to get the "big picture".

When taking your pictures, be aware of shadows cast on your subject by greenhouse structures or equipment contained therein.

Taking pictures of flowers in greenhouses

Greenhouses let in a lot of sunlight, so the same techniques apply as if you were shooting out of doors. However, you don't have to deal with wind. Also, if it's much cooler outside than it is in the greenhouse, windows will fog up, diffusing sunlight and therefore providing softer lighting conditions. Greenhouses also provide opportunities to photograph species (for example, orchids) that don't normally grow in your region. When taking your pictures, be aware of shadows cast on your subject by greenhouse structures or equipment contained therein.

Taking pictures indoors



Photographing cut flowers in the comfort of your home gives you a lot more control than if you are shooting outdoors or even in a greenhouse. For starters, you can choose a specific flower, isolate it and have full control over lighting and background conditions. You can even photograph your potted plants if you wish. For close-up photography, use macro mode as you would outdoors.

Or, you may want to photograph an entire flower arrangement in its vase. To start, make sure that your camera's macro mode is switched off. Prepare such a photograph as you would prepare a portrait of a human being. After all, it is a still life and is very similar to a portrait in that it is a pose, but not of a person.

For best results, use fresh-cut flowers with properly trimmed stems. For an extra-special photograph, use flowers from your own garden.

For more tips and tricks that you can use to photograph flower arrangements, please consult the portraits tutorial on this website.

Learn about flowers to take better pictures

One way to improve your floral photography is to learn more about flowers. Botanical gardens, community greenhouses, provincial and national parks, and nature preserves are some of the places where you can not only photograph flowers but also learn more about them. You can also attend flower shows, visit local gardening supply centres, visit your local library or do research on the World Wide Web. The more you know about flowers and about where and when they grow, the better your pictures will be.

With so many species blooming at different times and in different regions, your knowledge will help you determine where and when you can take the best possible pictures.

Floral photography is also a great way to decorate your home. Tastefully framed pictures of flowers can complement any décor. You can even change the photographs throughout the year to reflect what flowers are blooming at any given time.

An Introduction to Macro Photography

<http://www.cheapshooter.com/2008/08/04/an-introduction-to-macro-photography/>

Posted by [tgiglio](#) on August 4th, 2008 [No Comments](#) [Printer-Friendly](#)



Photo by eggman

It's summer. The flowers are in bloom, the light is fantastic, and it's a great time of year to spend some time outside. So, the next time you head outdoors, bring your camera and shoot some macro photography. It's the arguably the best time of year to do it.

Contrary to popular belief, you don't need tons of expensive equipment to shoot close-ups. Yes, a macro lens, extension tubes and a ring flash will help, but you can still take breathtaking photos outdoors without them - even on a cheap digital camera. In fact, some of the consumer digicams are great options for macro shots, as their small sensors and compact lenses produce a nice depth of field and a very small minimum focal distance. Both these attributes are key to producing tack-sharp macro photos. Here are some other tips:

1. Be bold with composition: Don't be afraid to be experiment with your composition. Try to use the bright, beautiful colors to your advantage while also trying to keep the background clean. You want your subject to shine in a macro photo. Cluttered backgrounds will only detract from your shot.



Photo by tengtan

2. Nail your focus: Your subject needs to be tack sharp. If you're photographing an insect, focus on its eyes. If not, make sure everything is sharp. Double check and triple check focus before taking your photo - the smaller depth-of-field in macro photography gives you less room for error than in a typical photo. Missed focus will always ruin a macro shot.



Photo by Nelay

3. Watch your aperture:For a perfect macro photo, it's crucial to use manual settings on your digital camera. Remember that depth of field narrows the closer you get to an object, so in many instances a larger aperture (smaller f/number) will only give you a sliver of focus in your frame, and it may not be enough. Smaller apertures (larger f/numbers) will increase your depth of field and bring more of the frame into focus. But be careful - too small of aperture and you might have a distracting amount of detail in your image. It's all about balance. Experiment with your aperture settings as you take the shot.



Photo by jjjohn

4. Use a fast shutter speed (generally): Whether you're taking a photo of a bee as it flies from one petal to another or the pistil of a petunia, always use a fast shutter speed. On a scale this small, even the lightest breeze could move your subject matter and blur your photograph. If it's really windy, try to stabilize your subject matter. Remember that the image stabilization features in your digital camera do nothing to stop motion in the real world - they only control camera shake. Only a faster shutter can cut down on this kind of blur.



Photo by Hans van Meenen

5. Stabilize your camera: This doesn't mean that in-camera or in-lens stabilization is useless. By all means, if you have it, turn it on. Even the slightest camera shake will ruin a macro photo. For added protection - or if you don't have a camera or lens with stabilization technology - using a tripod, a bean bag, or a rock, stabilizing your camera is crucial. And if you have a cable release it will definitely come in handy.



Photo by DGM Dino

6. Find direct light and/or use a flash: Because you're using faster shutter speeds to halt motion, you'll need to find as much light as possible, especially if you're shooting at smaller apertures. Direct light will help make up for the lack of light while also helping to make your colors pop. If you find that you need more light, use a flash. Lens-mounted ring flashes tend to work the best for shooting macro, but they are expensive and are usually only an option for photographers with digital SLRs - not consumer cameras. Generally, a consumer camera's on-board flash is useless at close range, so you may have to make do with available light.



Photo by algo

7. Take your time and shoot lots of photos: You know the point when you're shooting when you think you're just not going to get the photo you want? Well, when you feel that way just stay a little longer. Let the butterfly fly into your frame rather than chasing it. And remember to shoot a ton of photos. Expect a success rate will be around 10 percent with macro photography. So, don't get discouraged, just keep shooting.



Photo by Mr. Clean

8. Don't just shoot flowers and insects: We know. There are a lot of examples on this page. Ironic isn't it? It's partially because these are the subjects that every budding macro photographer shoots. So break out of the box. The beauty of macro photography is that it shows us the world from a different, up-close perspective. Flowers and insects aren't the only thing that looks stunning close up. Macro photography transforms the mundane into something spectacular, so, try and find other subjects to shoot.



Photo by maestropastelero