

Landscaping For Flora

Text and photography copyright © Nathan Buck. All rights reserved.

We moved into a home with an existing yard about two years ago. I thought that by moving into a home with an existing yard that we would not have to do much work on the yard itself. It turns out we were wrong about that, as we quickly realized that the lawn and sprinklers were not working out well for us at all. Last year we redid the sprinklers, so this year it was time to redo the yard itself.

We had several goals in redoing the yard. The main one was to get in some grass that our kids could enjoy playing on and to make the yard visually appealing. I also had some goals where it came to my photography. I wanted some containers in our garden with several different varieties of flowers planted with clean backgrounds for photos. I also wanted to be able to continue to use my time as much as I can for shooting instead of gardening, while making my yard a place where my kids could still play and have fun. After all, what is summer without a Slip and Slide?

Containers

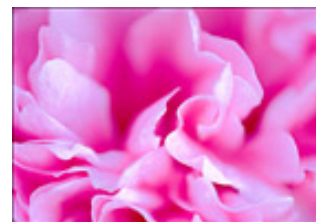
My wife and I discovered the fun of planting different varieties of flowers in container gardens several years ago and still have several containers today. Aside from minor runoff from the bottom when they are watered, containers are pretty self-contained and trouble-free.

Containers are good for photography for several reasons. First, they can be moved, turned, and repositioned for better angles of shooting or better light. Another advantage is that they can be bought tall or lifted up to spare your back when shooting. Also, if you shoot using the Michael Brown "cram-it" method (cramming the end of the lens into the foliage and shooting through blooms and foliage), the containers work well because they can be packed so full of flowers. Containers work especially well for creeping varieties of flowers.



Different Varieties

There are several different reasons that I would like several different varieties of flowers in our garden. Most of these involve reasons such as not wanting to get bored shooting the same old flowers over and over. Other reasons involve wanting to have more shots of different flowers in my portfolio. While I would like many different varieties of flowers through our garden, I did not want to have just one of each variety because I wanted some continuity through the garden.



One tip that we have received in redoing our yard was that groups of "threes" was an effective way to add continuity and to make our yard visually appealing. We used a similar method in adding flowers to our yard. Using three or more of the same flower added some continuity to our yard, but also allowed us to use a good deal of variety and color. Before you go and buy plants for your yard, you may find it helpful to see which "Hardiness Zone" your home area falls. There are several maps available on the Internet if you search "USDA Plant Hardiness Zones."

A Clean Background

Look around the NPN flora photo forum today and you will see that a clean background behind a flower can make all the difference between a good shot and a wonderful shot. Fitting flowers into planter areas in a yard around home can make finding a clean background for shooting the blooms more challenging. There are a couple of different methods that I have used in trying to plant our flowers so that I can find a clean background when shooting them.



One method that I have tried to use in planting perennials and annuals in our garden was to plant in front of a shrub or other plant that can be used as a pleasing background color. Not all shrubs

may be a color that you want to have as a background color, but many are.

I Want To Photograph, Not Garden

One goal during the redesign of our yard was to use drip irrigation to water the garden so that we could conserve some water by just watering the plants that needed to be watered. We also hoped that this would result in fewer weeds, since we were not just spraying all of the soil in the garden. This is one way that allows me to spend less time in the garden.

One way that I might be spending more time in the garden, though to a good end, is in deadheading our perennials and some of our annuals. Typically a perennial will flower much longer if the spent blooms are snipped off periodically. A good set of pruners should help with this process. After speaking to an attendant at our favorite greenhouse, I have decided to not worry about cutting back our flowers more often if they seem to be struggling to produce blooms.



Sigh...My Yard Is Not Just For Photography?

This initiative goes along with the other of not wanting to spend all of my time in the garden. Keeping our planters large enough to look good and be functional, but not too large, still allows us to keep the play set for our kids and allows them some grass to play on. I am hoping that my flowers do not end up under a basketball or soccer ball, but kids will be kids.

Pre-Planting Fun

I have one other quick note about landscaping your yard with flowers. If you buy flowers with blooms on them you can have some added photo accessibility before they are planted. Make sure, however, that you are not buying plants with too many blooms which may have sacrificed root growth for bloom production.

I hope that my thoughts and photos have been enjoyable and helpful to you. Remember that in order to make some improvements in your yard for photography, you do not have to redo the entire thing, just improvements here and there. After all, the flora gallery would be a lonely place if everyone went out and devoted the rest of their summer to yard work!

Comments on NPN nature photography articles? Send them to the [editor](#).

Nathan Buck resides in Lehi, Utah with his wife, Charisma, and their three young sons. Nathan is a hobbyist photographer whose other favorite pastime is spending time with his family; he finds that photography allows him to do both. Nathan enjoys shooting a wide range of subjects, with flora being at the top of the list (at least for now, his wife says).



[Site Map](#) • [NPN Membership](#) • [Front Page](#) • [Reader's Forum](#) • [Links](#) • [Gift Shoppe](#) • [Terms of Use](#)

Copyright 2000 - 2008, Nature Photographers Online Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved.