

## Flora Photography From One Beginning Flora Photographer To Another

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**My wife is an attorney. She has specialized in adoptions, working from our home.** Even though she learned about a lot of different aspects of law in law school, adoptions are her specialty. Even though this is the case, when people hear that she is a lawyer, they may ask her the most obscure contract question; she may also get some complex estate planning questions asked of her. I bring this up because many people, myself included, see photography as photography. Just because I take some decent landscape photos, suddenly I am the best candidate to shoot someone's wedding. Let me assure you that this is not the case.

I realized this parallel when I started shooting flora photography. I thought "How hard can it be? It is all just nature right?" Wrong! These are some observations that I have made as I have started shooting some flora shots this past year. I do not have all of the answers; these are just some things that I noticed about mistakes that I made, and progress that I have made.

Many of the images that are displayed with this writing you may have seen displayed here on NPN in the Flora image critique forum. The users here have been instrumental in helping me to realize how to improve my flora photography. I am deeply appreciative of each thought and suggestion.

### Background, background... did I mention background?

Look around the [flora forum](#) today and you are likely to see a lot of comments on the cleanliness of a background. A pleasing background is one that allows a flower portrait to stand out from the background. Finding a pleasing background can be easier said than done. One way to control the background is by using basic legwork; simply moving around your subject to get the most pleasing background behind it. Another way is to use a wider aperture to blur the background behind your subject, while still using an f-stop that will allow for enough depth of field to render your subject's details in focus. Using a lens with a longer focal length can also help with this process since the field of view is narrower and less extraneous elements are visible with a longer focal length.

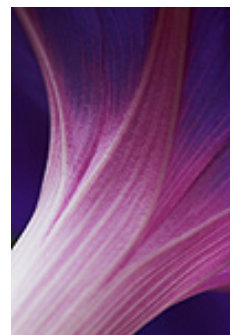
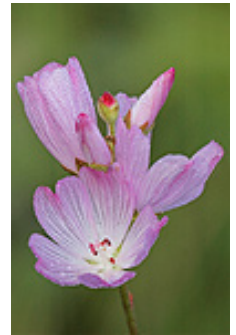
### Small Movements

Probably one of the hardest things for me to realize when I started shooting flora subjects was the fact that I was missing many interesting compositions because I was moving too far each time I recomposed. In landscape shooting, you may move several feet (or much more) to recompose a shot. In flora shooting, many different (and more interesting) compositions can be found within inches of each other. Being patient and working with a subject can help in this situation. Small movements are helpful whether working a large bloom such as an iris, or a small bloom like a Swan River Daisy.

### Familiarity

Like many other types of photography, the familiarity with a subject will lead to more success in photographing that subject. Developing this familiarity is important with flowers in general, and is important with specific species that you might be interested in. As I have become more familiar with a certain type of flower, I have been able to get past the striking beauty of a certain subject, and begin to explore the character of a flower. Familiarity with a subject cannot be overlooked as an important skill in flora photography.

### Parts of the whole

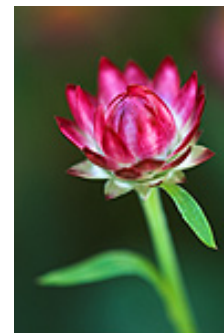


Sometimes, flora subjects are just too large to shoot all in one shot. An iris is the first bloom that comes to my mind. By trying to include the whole bloom, often there are extra elements that cannot be avoided, or the background of the shot cannot be controlled as well. By shooting to show certain parts of the flower, intriguing compositions can be accomplished without having to show the whole bloom. Much can be accomplished with isolation of certain parts of your subject. Many times these isolated shots will be more interesting than the whole! A lily is another tough bloom to shoot, because they are so large.



### Different Angles and Perspectives

Different angles are important in many types of photography, and are no different in flora photography. How often do we see photos of the back of a flower? How often do we see the view from underneath the flower? These are seldom seen views, but can be very interesting and effective. Think of how many times you take a photo of a bloom slightly off center, this is the classic composition. Try experimenting in shooting with some different angles and perspectives next time you shoot.



### Housecleaning

For some reason, this was also a concept that was hard for me to remember to do when I started shooting flora. Sometimes, when I get caught up in the shooting, I will still forget to houseclean before taking an image. What do I mean by that? Housecleaning would be simply moving any items that would not help the image. I am not advocating snipping off extra leaves or blooms, just moving elements slightly so they do not intrude on the subject that you are shooting. I remember reading in a thread once, when Mike Moats was asked if he removed extraneous elements from his compositions before taking the shot. He said that he did usually do some housecleaning before clicking the shutter. He said "Mother Nature should look her best when photographed."

As I have mentioned, there are many skills to be learned, and I am still developing them. These thoughts are just some that I have had as I have seen my interest - or addiction - in flora photography grow.

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**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).



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