

# 7 Easy & Simple Secrets to Better Flower Photos

by Sara L. Chapman

**Do you love flowers?** Here are 7 secrets to taking better photos in the garden, plus a bonus tip!

Author and flower photographer Sara L. Chapman shows you how take better flower photos using low-cost or free techniques—not complicated settings or fancy equipment. It's not the camera taking good pictures, it's YOU. Follow these suggestions and you'll be loving your photos, in the garden and everywhere.



## 1. Take LOTS of photos

With film cameras, there is some expense when taking multiple images. But with digital, once you are set up, there is zero expense. Practice definitely improves your ability, so even if you think you have a great photo already, take another, maybe from a slightly different angle, or try another setting. Go in close, then back up for the whole area, and maybe add a medium shot, too. A perfect flower in front of you deserves the best capture you can make. One key feature of digital cameras is the ability to delete. Ditch the less-than-great images so you aren't overwhelmed, keeping only the "pretty darn good" ones and better.



## 2. Choose perfect flowers for close ups

When you take a photo of a single flower, you invite the viewer to look extra closely at the flower you are presenting. Reward them with perfection! No one wants to study brown edges on petals. So find that perfect blossom, and make sure there are no dead or decaying blooms close by to mess up the image. If there are, sometimes the macro setting will help solve that problem by blurring. Or you can change your position, or even just break off the distracting dead bloom yourself. Even in a public garden, a little discreet deadheading can sometimes save the day.



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## 3. Try another angle



You'd be amazed at the number of people who never think to change the angle from which they take their photos. Especially with flower photography, when it's practical, try shooting upwards with the sky as a background. See what a flower looks like from the back of the blossom, or the underneath. And don't forget to notice the background of your photo! Keep it simple, or at least not distracting. Change your position so those trashcans, for instance, aren't visible, because even if blurred they will detract from your image.



## 4. Use your macro setting



That little flower icon on your camera? It's a godsend. Learn where it is and use it for those single magnificent blooms or fascinating foliage, or a great way to show off a flower in its setting, or just for a cool effect. On a bright day, it can blur the background enough to bring all the attention to your chosen subject. The background elements will still show but they will recede in importance and make your image much cleaner and easy to enjoy.



## 5. Compose!



There are lots of elements to composition, but the most important is that the eye be drawn to where you want it to go. In our culture, we read from left to right, so the eye tends to start at the upper left, swirl around the middle, and end at the lower right. Avoid placing your flower right in the center. Angled lines like the edges of a flower bed, perhaps, will encourage the eye to look at a certain direction. And light areas get noticed before dark areas. This is something that improves with practice, like everything. So take lots, varying your position slightly, and see which ones give you a more satisfying image.



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## 6. Pay attention to the light



Look for back or side lighting for unusual, exciting photos. That early morning or late afternoon sunshine, the golden hour, can add a magical quality to photographs. But if the light is overcast, you can get the fine details that might be lost on a sunnier day. And if the sunshine is brilliant and overhead, focus on the most brightly lit part of the flower, letting the rest go darker if it will. That can produce some very dark, almost black, backgrounds, with no studio set-up needed!



## 7. Take the biggest image you can



Computer storage is cheap. Consult your manual if you need to, and set your camera to its highest resolution (biggest image). Store your images (and back up!) in a hard drive or online, and be firm about deleting poor or boring ones—that alone will make you a better photographer. If that special photo you took is a great one, you'll want to enlarge, crop, and print it, all needing maximum resolution. You can always make the image smaller later, but you can never make the image larger, not without major loss of quality. That perfect garden vista and lighting will never come again, so be prepared.



Which leads us to . . .

## 8. BONUS TIP: Invest in and take extra batteries and a spare memory card



Nothing is more frustrating than to be in a unique, unrepeatable photo opportunity—with a dead battery or full memory card. Keep your memory card empty and available by frequent uploads, and always have at least one fully-charged spare battery set with you. They're small! You'll be glad you did.

Happy photographing!

