

Macro Flower Photography

Winner of AHS 2006 Best Article On Photographing Daylilies

By Art Bova

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Previously it has been mentioned that there are three kinds of flower photography - #1 macro or close-up photography, #2 the whole plant, and #3 garden photography. This article will focus on the most enchanting kind of photography, macro or close-up photography, where the bloom is emphasized and where the bloom fills up all of the picture.

Just three years ago, the only way to macro photography was to have a close-up or macro lens. You had to have an interchangeable body with lenses that screwed in. (This is still the best way to go whether it is digital or film.) Therefore, point-and-shoot cameras could not do this kind of photography. Now, the new digital cameras have a button for this setting, with most of them showing a flower to allow you to do this close-up focusing. Bingo, everyone can now photograph those vibrant flowers up close.

To take a picture close-up, requires some maneuvering on your part. You should position yourself to the front of the flower, but be approximately 6" from the center of the flower so that you can get all of the internal parts and not have anything fuzzy or not in focus. If you take a photograph of a flower dead-on, you may get some internal parts in focus, but you will have the pistil and stamens out of focus. This is a no-no. You will recognize this when you see it.

You need to be at the flower level in order to get the good shot. It is recommended that you use a tripod to do this. This will steady your photograph and allow you to compose and adjust it to get it perfect and the way you want it. It is very difficult to squat, hold yourself steady and try to focus on a small flower. If you take yoga, exercise three times a day, and do marathons every other weekend, you may be fit enough to do this. (Jokingly) Therefore, I would recommend that you use a tripod and if you refuse to carry a tripod, to bring knee pads so that you can get in tight and hold the camera steady.

What you want to focus on is the beauty of the blossom. Daylilies have many textures, colors, variations, multi-colors and pastel pallets of color. This is what you want to feature in your photograph. My most successful photographs have been a double blossom of the DONNA PECK daylily which I sell framed for \$750 and the internal beauty of an Iris where the falls and the standards are joined.

If you perfect this technique, you will have year-round beauty to enjoy all of your blossoms.

Additionally, you can use your learned technique to take pictures of your garden by placing your blooms to the side and offering a panorama of the textures of your garden in the background. To take a good garden photo, you need to have a good foreground with blooms, interesting color and texture to set-up the picture.

To tell you a secret, when I travel and I have been fortunate to travel all seven continents, I look for English and Asian gardens when I am in the cities. I will spend 50 to 75% of my time photographing close-up flowers in these gardens. The results have been breathtaking to me as well as to others.

Some variations for you to consider are backlighting where the texture of the flower is highlighted and/or is lit up to see the intricate cells of the flower. This can be very enchanting.

Just photographing one part of the flower such as the stamen, pistil, the standards, the uprights, the petals, etc., will often reveal intricate forms and enticing textures. Taking a spray bottle of water and adding water droplets will also enhance the flower and if you move in close, you can get reflections of the parts of the flower in the water drops for added excitement. In other words, practice, play and experiment and you will be rewarded.

Not all of us can grow all of the kinds of flowers that we desire. This is one of the reasons why we take tours. Flowers obviously have different color, textures and size depending on where they grow because of the climate conditions in that locale. You don't have to have the largest bankroll to capture these flowers. All that you need is your macro photography sharpness and techniques, and you will bring home your garden and the world's gardens for you to enjoy and display. Good shooting!