

# Tips For Taking Better Flower Photographs

By Peggy Cathey

With the arrival of Spring, our interest immediately turns to our daylily gardens and the anticipation of all the beautiful daylily blooms to come. There will be old favorites as well as new ones we haven't seen bloom in our garden before. There is no better way to prolong the joy of your beautiful flowers than to take photographs to share with your friends, family, social media, and your Region 6 **Daylilies of the Southwest** newsletter. How great would it be to have a photo you have taken appear on the cover of our newsletter?

I am old school – meaning I still use a camera to take my garden photos instead of my Smartphone. Things to consider when you take your camera into the garden is how do you plan to share your photos? If on social media or email, you may choose a lower resolution. If using a digital camera with a removable storage card, that means you are able to take hundreds of pictures per card, but with fewer pixels (for viewing on the computer or internet). If you think you might want to print any of your photographs or submit them for the Region 6 newsletter or the ADS annual photo contests, you will want a 'Fine' (i.e. pixels) setting and fewer images per card. Your camera manual will explain this in more detail and instruct you on how to set your camera for the results you want.

Instead of having your eyes glaze over with a lot of technical jargon, I will just give you a few tips for taking better photos of your flowers. These tips or suggestions would also apply to most of your Smartphones. I will attempt to include photo examples, but writing a photography article before bloom season begins, leaves me at the mercy of previous photo files.

- First, learn how to hold your camera. Use two hands and tuck your elbows in to hold the camera steady. One-handed isn't the best way to use your camera because you can't hold it steady enough for clear, sharp photos.
- My number one tip for taking better photographs (after you learn how to hold your camera) is to take your camera off the



**'Automatic'** setting. This may sound scary to a lot of you, but on **'Auto'**, you have no control over the focus or the flash. There are still settings on your camera that will make your photo taking easier without having to know 'f-stops', 'depth of field', and other technical terms.



Not a daylily, but this was taken using **Auto**. The grass is in focus, but flower is not.

- Want to take a photo of your garden? Use the **'Landscape'** setting. With this setting, everything in the shot, from near to far, will be in focus. Choose a spot about 1/3 into the view and take your shot.



Paul Owens' **Slightly Different Nursery**, NC.

- Want a single bloom? Use the **'Portrait'** setting. You are, in fact, taking a portrait of your beautiful flower, so by using the portrait



# Tips For Better Photographs (continued)

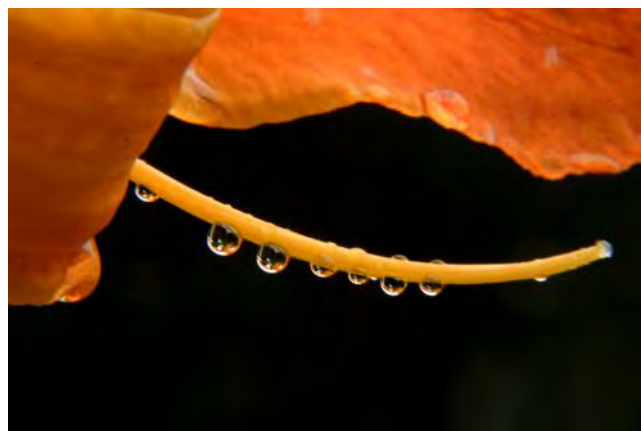
By Peggy Cathey

setting, you will focus on what is important. The flower will be in sharp focus, and the background will blur slightly, making the flower stand out even more.



H. 'Quiller', Owens, 2008. Notice how the leaves in the background are slightly blurred making the flower stand out.

- What if you have a bug or unusual pattern you want to get a close-up of? For this, you would want to use the '**Macro**' setting. Be sure to check your camera manual to see what the focal length is. If you get too close or too far away, it will blur. I once had a camera with a button on the strap that was the exact focal length for shooting in Macro. I would just measure that distance from the subject to the camera, and it would be perfect every time. You could do this using a safety pin on your camera strap. If you want to take really close-up photos (Macro), a tripod would really help, and even a self-timer or remote shutter release would help stop



ADS 2019 Artistic Garden Image Award winner by Jerry Gantar

camera shake. (Use a tripod only in your garden. It is too easy to knock off buds and blooms, which you wouldn't want to do in someone else's garden.)

- Look around to see what distractions may be in your shot. Are there water hoses, plant markers, spent blooms, or trash that could be moved or picked up? Again, don't do this in someone else's garden. If it is something that can't be moved, you move around to see if there is a better angle to eliminate the distraction.



Spent blooms could have been removed before photographing this seedling.

- Lighting is always an issue. Being outdoors means you can't always plan for the best lighting situation. If at all possible, avoid taking photos in the middle of the day with a bright sun shining overhead. Too much light will not only cause your colors to wash out, but you will also have dark shadows where you will also lose your color. The ideal time for photographing flowers is on a bright but overcast day. How many times on National or Regional garden tours have you had that ideal situation? Probably not many, so do the best you can. Being in the garden before 10 a.m. is probably the best time to be out taking pictures. After 5 p.m. is another good time, but for our daylily blooms, which only open for one day, they are usually tired by that time and are ready to call it a day. A simple test for lighting is to hold a finger over your open palm. If there is a deep shadow, there will be deep shadows on your flowers. If the shadow is blurry or faint, there should be plenty of good light for taking



# Tips For Better Photographs (continued)

By Peggy Cathey

great photographs.



Too much sun and you lose the color in the petals, you also get unwanted shadows. H. 'Cindy's Eye', Salter, 1994

- To Zoom or not to Zoom, that is the question. Most cameras have a zoom feature that will help



Flower get lost if you aren't close enough. Use your feet, not your camera to ZOOM, or get closer.



Step in close and fill the frame. This way you can see more details in the flower. H. 'Hot Ember', Stamile, 1986

you see things up close that are far away. The problem is, the more you zoom, the steadier you have to hold your camera and the more light that is required for a good result. The best way to ZOOM is with your FEET. Move-in closer and fill the frame with your subject. If you are too far away, your beautiful flower could be lost in a forest of foliage or other flowers. Get in close, and fill the frame with what you want others to see.

Take a lot of pictures. Try lots of different angles. The digital world has made taking lots of photos so much easier than when you had to take the costly film to be developed, and if your prize photo didn't come out just right, you might have had to wait a whole year to get the shot again.

The main thing is to have fun and share your photos with others. Send some to me for the newsletter. The one thing I have heard time and again about the newsletter is how everyone loves all the color photos. Does your club offer a photo contest at your flower shows? This is a great opportunity to show off your photographic skills.

Enter the ADS Photography contests. The deadline for entering your photographs is Nov. 1 each year. There are several categories to enter:

•**Mildred Schlumpf Photography Award** is given annually for the best color photograph in each of two categories: Single bloom and landscape.

•**Multi-bloom Photography Award** for images of two blooms up to an entire clump.

•**Artistic Garden Image Award** is for images that include all or part of a daylily bloom. The category may include but is not limited to images of bloom segments or part of a bloom, profile shots of a bloom or blooms, garden art, garden critters, and images taken around the garden.

**Youth Photography Award** is broken into two divisions Beginner— open to ADS Youth age 5-12 and Intermediate— ADS Youth members 13— and under eighteen years of age by the November 1 contest deadline.

For more information on the ADS Photography contests, go to the ADS website: <https://daylilies.org/daylilies/awards/?type=photography>