

14 tips

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FOR CREATING
CAPTIVATING
PLANT & FLOWER
PHOTOS (EVEN IF
YOU DON'T OWN A
MACRO LENS!)

Want to take vibrant, eye-catching plant and flower photos, steeped in your unique creative vision? Instead of bland, boring snaps?

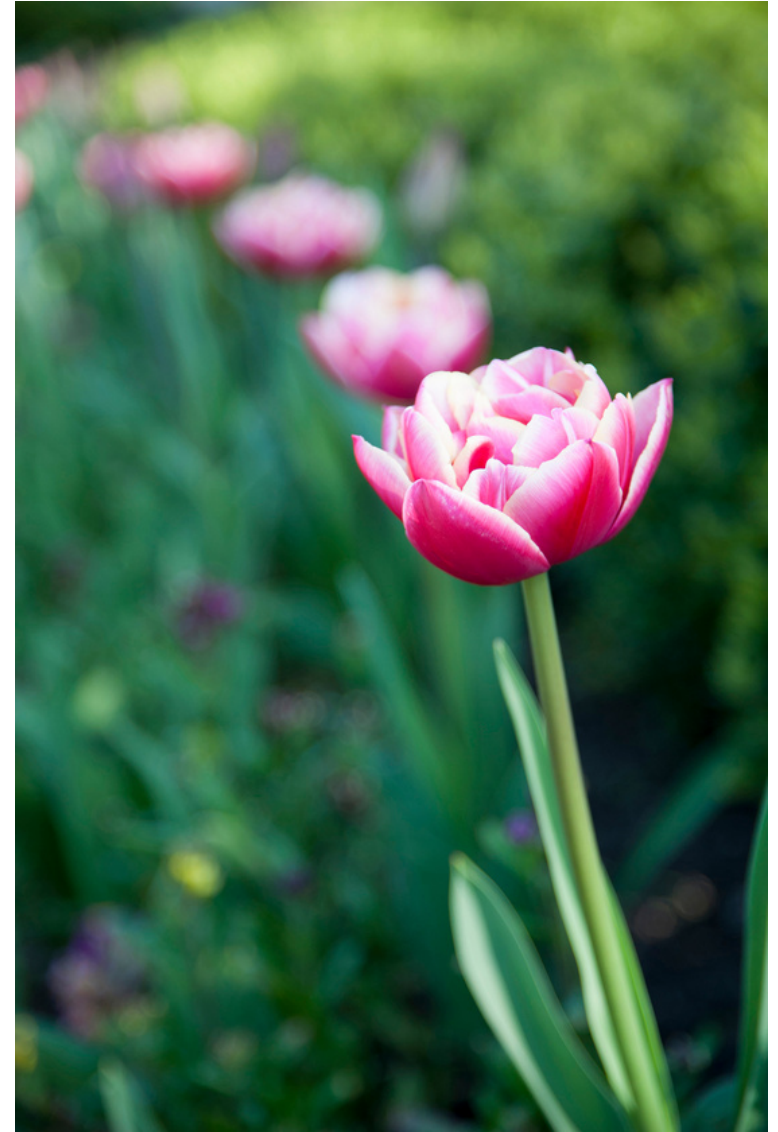
Do you wish you could take wall-worthy photos of flowers and plants, like the ones you see in magazines and online? Then this guide is for you.

Maybe you start out full of inspiration when you see a beautiful flower. But somehow, your photo fails to do it justice, and instead you end up with nothing more than a disappointing snap that looks like it could have been taken by anyone.

Well, let's fix that, shall we? Photographing flowers and plants is incredibly satisfying and fulfilling. But to dramatically improve your chances of bagging a winner, you need to get **much more specific and intentional** before you press that shutter button.

And that's where these 14 tips will help. Each is aimed at improving one particular aspect of your flower photography. You don't need to try them all at once, although some of them do overlap. Pick one or two and practise them regularly until you've mastered them thoroughly. Then add more as your confidence grows.

Soon you'll have a whole array of techniques that will help transform your images from average to amazing. And remember, you definitely don't need a macro lens to use these successfully!





Hello!

I'm Anna Saverimuttu, a professional photographer and photography course instructor, based in Guildford.

For over a decade now, I've taught keen but confused beginners how to use their cameras confidently.

Photographing nature is my refuge from the constant noise and chatter of the world. So when I'm not working, you'll usually find me totally absorbed in a plant that's caught my eye, and photographing it from every conceivable angle - yes, I am obsessed!

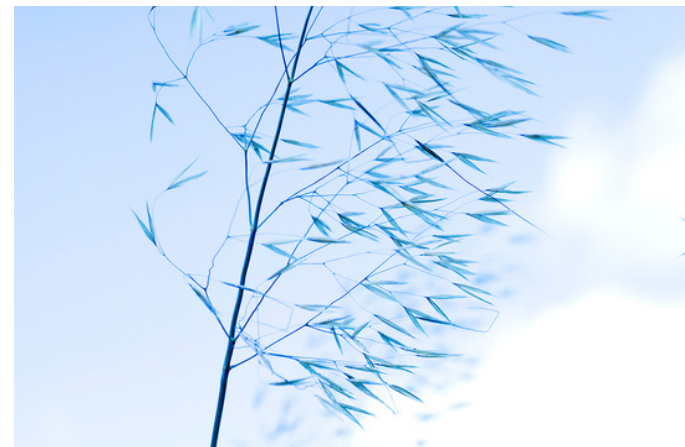
I love passing on the knowledge gained from a career spanning over 20 years, and helping others become confident photographers. But without the overwhelming jargon that stops so many from moving forward off the Auto setting.

I hope you enjoy this guide and find the tips I've put together really helpful. Master these, and you'll transform your flower photos.

"I was even able to explain everything to my husband and he understood! Just had my first solo foray into the butterfly house at Wisley and shocked my children with the results."

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01

CHOOSING THE RIGHT LENS

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A MACRO!

If you don't own a macro lens, don't worry. Lots of flower and plant portraits can be taken on other lenses, as you'll see on these pages.

I'd suggest that you use a lens with a longer focal length (higher number) for close-up shots, and to blur the background out effectively. You'll be able to see the focal length printed on the lens. Zoom lenses show a range of focal lengths, e.g. 18mm - 135mm. Prime lenses have a fixed focal length, so will show only one number. If your lens isn't that long, simply move in closer to your subject.

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02

SELECT THE RIGHT APERTURE

HELP YOUR SUBJECT STAND OUT

Want your photos to look less like "snaps"? The easiest way to get them looking far more professional is to choose Aperture Priority (A or Av on your camera's mode dial.)

Then set the aperture to a lower number - something like f5.6 or f4. This will help blur the background so your flower or plant really stands out. But there's more! So read on ...

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03 THE EASIEST LIGHT TO START WITH

THINK YOU NEED BRIGHT SUNSHINE? THINK AGAIN

Unless you use it very carefully, bright sunshine is likely to cause lots of problems when photographing flowers. It creates extremely high contrast which produces bleached highlights and dark shadows that will ruin all the natural beauty of your subject.

So your best bet is to take your photos on cloudy, overcast days, or to find a subject that's protected by the shade. This instantly reduces contrast, makes colours appear softer and more even, and banishes about 99% of your problems!



Compare the harsh, hard lighting in the first photo with the soft, even lighting in the second.

04 CREATE MAGIC WITH HARD LIGHT

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF THE LIGHT



Okay, having just told you to avoid bright sunshine, here's how you CAN use hard light to your advantage! But your success with this technique depends on carefully observing the **direction** of that light.

Backlighting involves shooting when the sun is **behind** your plant or flower and shining **towards** your camera; if you can master this, it will shift everything for you. Suddenly, your subject will glow and look vibrant, and all the tiny details, such as veins and hairs will stand out. (Safety note – don't look directly at the sun through your camera's lens!)

05 FIND THE RIGHT BACKGROUND

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

The background can make or break your composition, so don't neglect it. Before clicking the shutter, check carefully for any potential distractions that could ruin an otherwise beautiful image.

Try these techniques for finding the right setting for your subject:

- Choose a background that's very plain, so the subject really jumps out.
- Find an area where the sun's filtering through a patch of foliage; used with a large aperture on a longer lens, the effect is stunning.
- Use flowers or plants in the distance to establish a link with your main subject, and to add some context.



06

BACKGROUND & SUBJECT DISTANCE

HELP THAT LARGE APERTURE TO REALLY WORK IN YOUR FAVOUR!

Even with an aperture like f5.6, if your background and subject are too close together, you won't be able to achieve as much blur. So look for flowers and plants where there's lots of space between them and their setting.

The background in this image is so far away from the subject that it's been reduced to any airy nothingness; this complements the delicacy of the blossom and also allows the branch to stand out as it bisects the frame.



07

ANGLE OF VIEW AND PERSPECTIVE

EYE LEVEL USUALLY = BORING!

Shooting at eye level seldom yields the most interesting results, unless you're photographing a particularly tall specimen!

But since lots of flowers are fairly close to the ground, crouching down until you're face to face with whatever you're photographing is a much better approach. For one thing, the background will be much further away than if you're photographing from above, when all you'll get will be earth, grass, twigs and other distractions. The altered perspective will allow you to add much more depth to your photos too.

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Eye level



Bug's eye level!

08

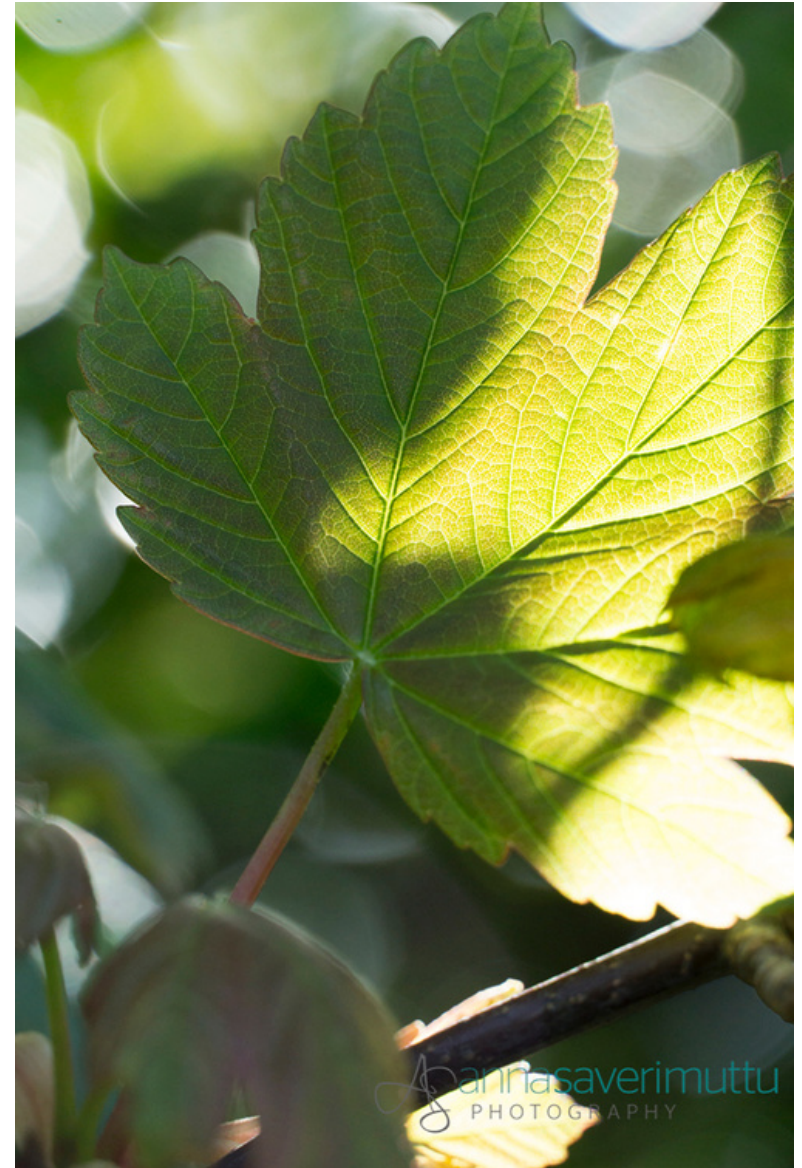
LESS LIGHT CAN BE MORE

SEEK OUT THE TINIEST SLIVER OF LIGHT

On an early spring morning or towards the end of a sunny day, keep an eye out for those little pockets of light as they settle briefly on a small area of a leaf or a flower. That's where the magic is happening! You'll get high contrast, but wonderful detail.

In this image the lighting has created tonal interchange, where there are highlights against shadows, and vice-versa.

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09

BLUR THE FOREGROUND TO ADD DEPTH

LAYERS ADD INTEREST AND A
SENSE OF THREE DIMENSIONS

Build your photo up in layers by blurring the foreground as well as the background.

The longer your lens, the more effectively you'll be able to do this.

Make sure that there's some interesting foreground detail and that it's fairly close to the lens; then focus behind it on your main subject and take your shot.



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10 GO ABSTRACT

WHAT YOU LEAVE OUT IS JUST AS IMPORTANT

It's easy enough to photograph a plant in its entirety, but I'd encourage you to look beyond the obvious.

Because there's real potential when you start to **exclude** things from your composition. Not only will it sharpen your observational skills, but your images will suddenly start to look dramatically different and definitely not run-of-the-mill.

With such a variety of shapes, structures and textures in the plant world, from spiky seed heads to serrated leaves, sometimes, the only way to do them justice is to get in close and reduce them to a simple abstract composition.

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11 DON'T NEGLECT THE WIDER VIEW

TAKE THE TIME TO STEP BACK OCCASIONALLY

Everyone loves a good detail shot. But if you have a lens with a shorter focal length, don't ignore the wider view too. A 50mm prime lens like the one I used to take the photo on the left is ideal, or you can choose a wider focal length on your zoom lens. Using a large aperture (see [Tip 2](#)) will still allow some interesting background blur while adding context to your photo.



12 JUST ADD WATER!

GET CREATIVE WITH LIGHT AND WATER

That moment when the rain stops and the sun emerges is not to be missed. It's the perfect opportunity to capture stunning combinations of water droplets on petals, grasses, leaves and branches.

And if you get the sun in the right place, you might even be lucky enough to capture some refraction, as in this shot, where the light has been split into the colours of the rainbow.

And if it's not raining, simply take some water in a plant sprayer and manufacture your own!

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EMBRACE FLARE & GHOSTING

LET THE SUN RUN RIOT OVER YOUR PHOTOS!

Strictly speaking, these are photographic faults that many photographers strive to avoid. But while they're certainly not welcome all the time, they have their place, and I love them! Why? Because they add that all-important element - atmosphere.

Flare and ghosting happen when the sun strikes the lens elements at a particular angle. The results can vary from a hazy, milky wash to defined circles or polygonal shapes. Experiment by moving your camera to either include or eliminate them. As always, please don't look directly at the sun through your lens - use live view instead.

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14 SHOOT IN EVERY SEASON

THERE'S NEVER NOTHING TO PHOTOGRAPH!

Of course it's lovely to take photos when everything's bursting into bloom, but don't neglect the autumn and winter months – there's loads to photograph if you look for it, from seed heads, to fungi, catkins to berries, and even flowers, like cyclamen and nerine. Take advantage of the elements too - rain, snow and frost will help infuse your photos with even more character and mood.



READY TO TAKE ACTION & MASTER YOUR CAMERA?

Why Learn With Me?

- You want a simple, repeatable system for understanding your camera once and for all.
- You dislike intimidating or overly complex and technical explanations.
- You'd benefit from learning face to face, with an expert by your side who can explain the ins and outs of your particular camera in easy-to-understand language.

Then don't wait any longer - find out more below and let's get your camera working for you!

[Discover more about working with me](#)

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WHAT THEY SAID

"I cannot say THANK YOU enough!!! This has revolutionised what I feel I can do with my camera. I finally feel like it's mine!! Eureka! Brilliant. So clear and easy to understand."

"Dear Anna, thank you so much for today's session. I have learnt a great deal - the fog has lifted! You have made everything so very much clearer than it had been before 10am this morning! I had a spring in my step as I walked to the car park. Thank you again."

"I feel I have learnt so much (I'm unable to even quantify it). Anna has been such a wonderful teacher, supportive of learning and very responsive. I have really loved my day. Fantastic material and practical session. Very informative, personal and just a wonderful session."

Let's Chat!

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