



Take Stunning Close-Up Nature Photos with your iPhone

Cheat Sheet Materials



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Photography by Jesse Hebert

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We make every effort to ensure
accurate, up-to-date and relevant
information. However, it’s important
to note that the iPhone’s technology
is under continuous development.

This course was created using:
iPhone 12 Mini – iOS 16.4

With each new model of the iPhone
and/or iOS update there is the
potential for alterations in the
interface, camera, tools, and other
software-related features. For this
reason, certain information in this
course may fall out of relevancy or
accuracy. For up-to-date information
on the iPhone and its newest features,
please visit: apple.com

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Welcome

Close-up nature photography is an excellent photographic topic, especially for beginners. This topic not only narrows down the potential subject matter to nature but it also forces you to get close. These conditions could be seen as restrictive but I’m sure that you’ll soon find a plethora of potential subjects and images once you start shooting!

The iPhone’s camera is more than capable of capturing stunning close-up nature photos. It’s small form factor is a huge advantage over many dedicated camera systems. Odds are, your iPhone and its camera are always with you. Through this course you will learn how to take full advantage of the camera that’s always with you!

In this course we cover the fundamental lessons of photography, the must-know tips and tricks for working with the iPhone’s camera, and the specific tips and tricks for capturing and editing close-up nature photos. In the course video, I bring you on-location with me to High Park where I capture the blooming cherry blossoms and discuss my process in real-time.

This material is designed to prolong the learning experience of our course: Take Stunning Close-Up Nature Photos with your iPhone. Each page serves as a cheat sheet for a certain topic discussed in the course. The information provided on these sheets is not exhaustive but rather a brief overview. For a more in-depth explanation of these concepts, please look to the course video or slide deck resource.

If you have any questions or comments about the information provided in this resource, the course video or the slide deck, please reach out to us and we would be happy to assist you!

Wishing you all the best in your photography adventures,

Jesse Hebert

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1 iPhone Camera Setup Guide

Optimal settings for your iPhone's camera.

IMAGE FORMATS

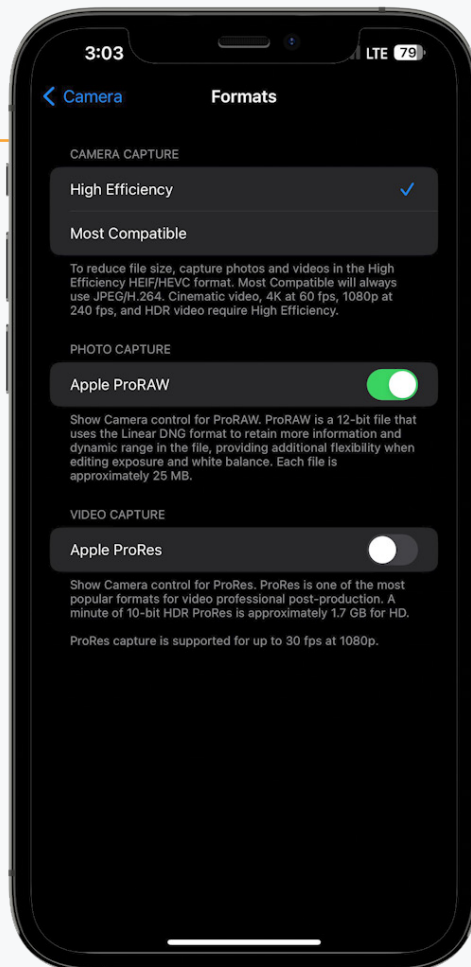
Settings > Camera > Formats

Since iOS 11, iPhone cameras have taken images in “High Efficiency” mode by default.

High Efficiency images are taken in HEIF format. They are comparable to the quality of a standard JPEG except the file size is 2x smaller!

Most Compatible images are taken in JPEG format. This file format is widely accepted and used, making it the ideal file format for sharing.

Apple ProRAW was introduced to Pro-line iPhones since the 12 Pro model. This format captures uncompressed information which allows for a wider dynamic range, more colour information and greater flexibility in editing. These files are about 4x larger than JPEG files.

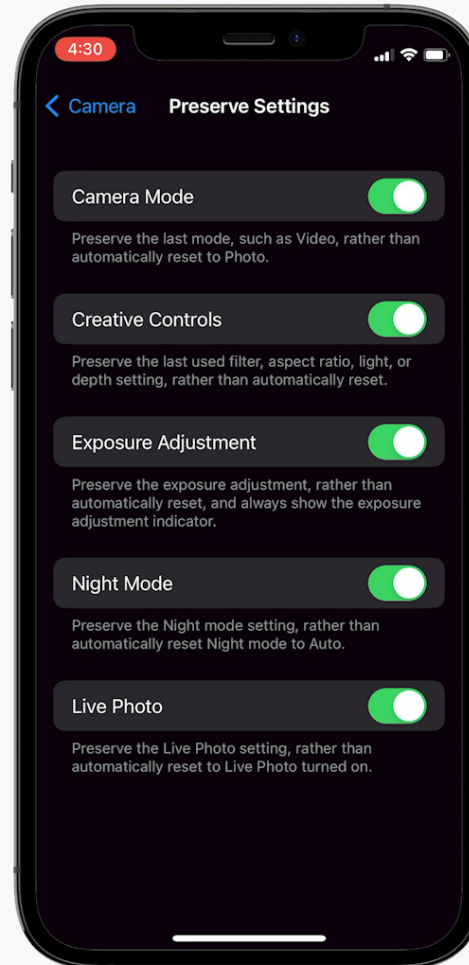
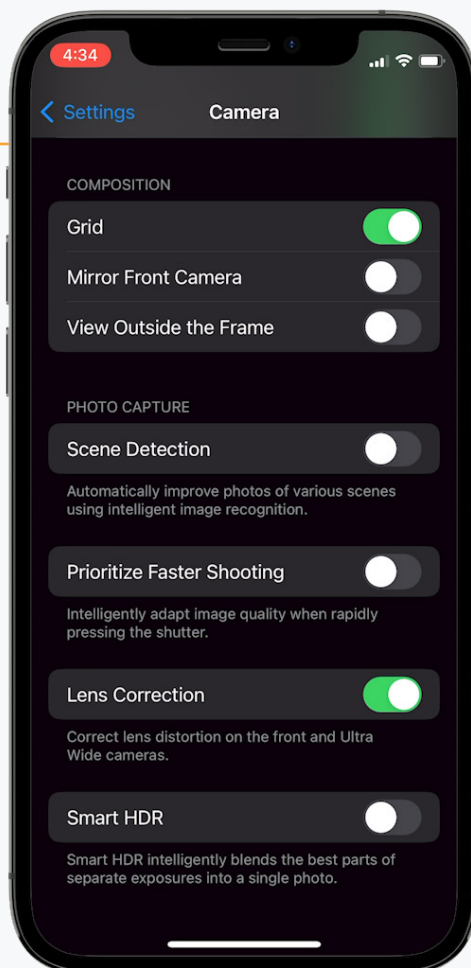


GRID & FASTER SHOOTING

Settings > Camera

Enabling the **Grid** feature will overlay a 3x3 grid over the shooting frame of the iPhone's camera. This grid helps in composition since it directly refers to the common compositional guide: Rule of Thirds. These lines can also assist in lining up a straight horizon line or straight vertical lines.

Prioritize Faster Shooting will degrade the quality of your images when shooting rapidly in order to shoot at a higher frame rate. I, personally, like to have this disabled since I want to capture the highest resolution possible always. When shooting rapidly, I will typically rely on the iPhone's Burst Mode.



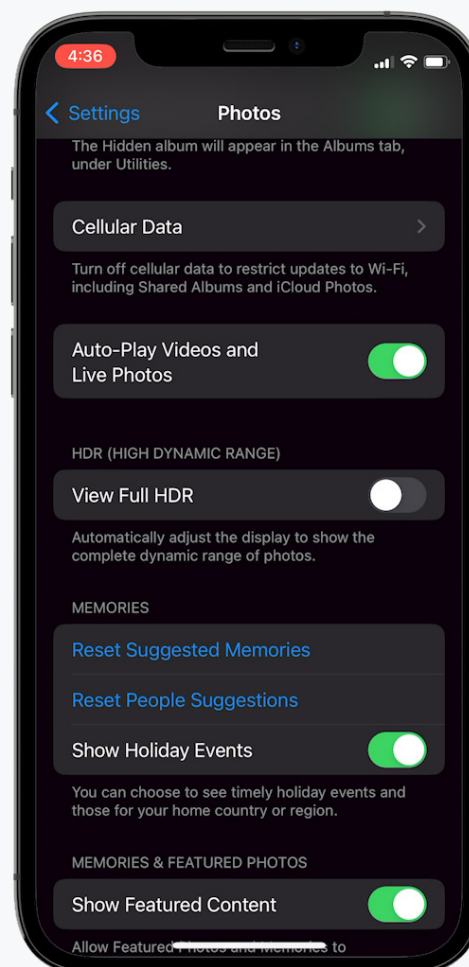
PRESERVE SETTINGS

Settings > Camera > Preserve Settings

By default, the iPhone's camera will reset to its default setup everytime that it is closed and re-opened. This can be less than ideal in many circumstances.

Preserve Settings, allows users to override this behaviour and tell the iPhone to save certain settings between uses.

This can be done by tapping the toggles next to each setting that you want to be preserved between uses.



VIEW FULL HDR (DISABLE)

Settings > Photos

This setting can sometimes produce strange results when viewing images in the Photos app.

Some users, myself included, have noticed their images having blown out highlights and over-sharpened details only when viewed in Photos. Disabling this feature seems to be the solution to this rare issue.

iPhone Camera Interface

Diagram of the iPhone's default camera.

REVEALS HIDDEN CAMERA TOOLS/FEATURES

FLASH

Tap to enable or disable the Flash.

LIVE PHOTO

Tap to enable or disable the Live Photo feature.

This feature records 1.5s before and after the shutter button is pressed, allowing users to use a different frame from the recording, create a gif animation or a long exposure image.

EXPOSURE COMPENSATION

Tap to adjust the iPhone's exposure. The exposure setting locks until the next time the camera app is opened.

HDR

Tap to enable or disable the HDR feature.

This feature blends multiple exposures of the same image in order to produce a photograph with a higher dynamic range.

VOLUME UP/DOWN

Click the volume up or volume down button to capture a single image.

EXPOSURE/FOCUS ADJUSTMENT

Tap the iPhone's screen to set the automatic focus and exposure point.

Drag the sun icon up or down to increase or decrease the exposure.

Tap and hold on the screen to enable the AE/AF Lock feature.

SWITCH LENSES

Switch between different focal lengths. Pro-line iPhones since iPhone 11 have a third lens available: 3x (approx. 77mm).

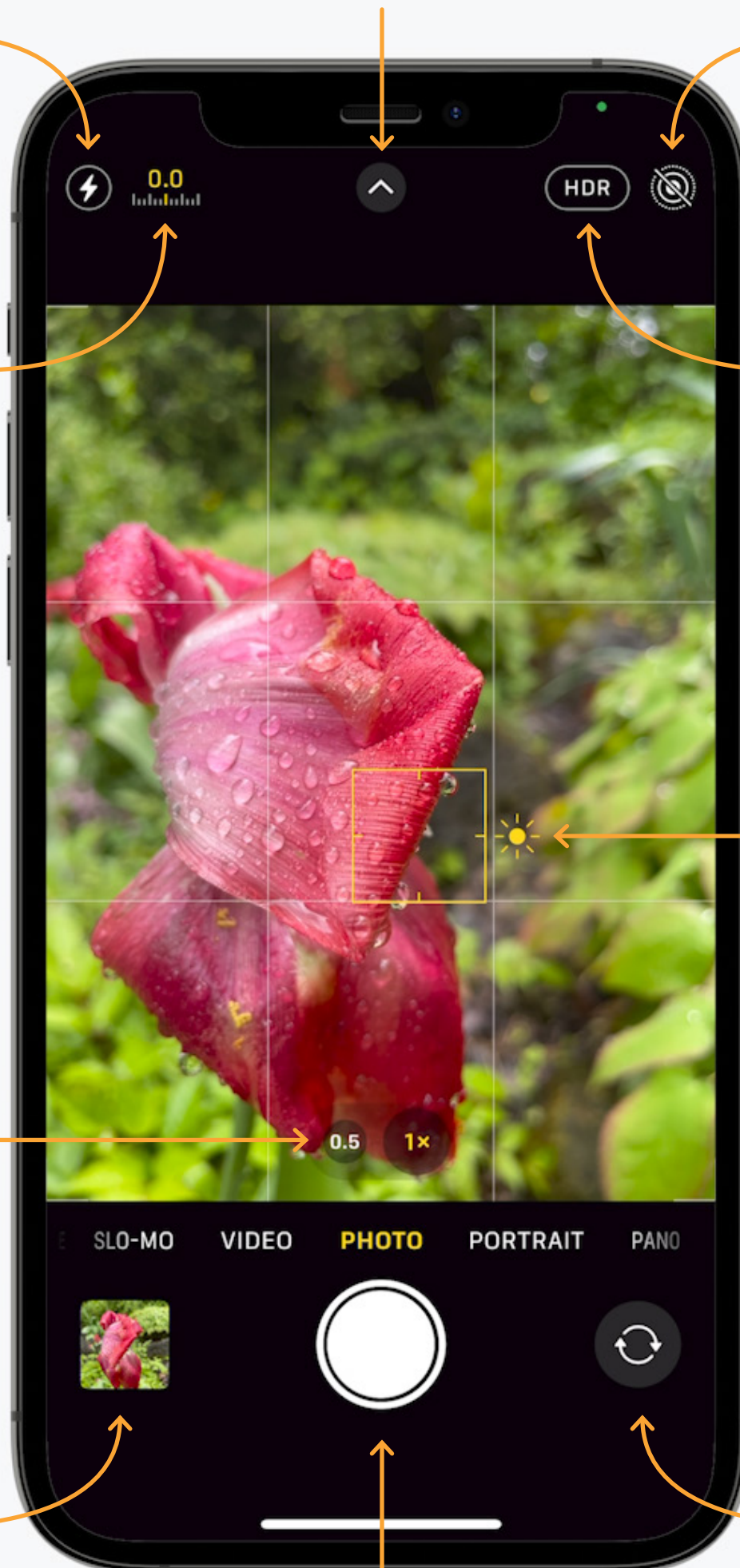
PHOTOS GALLERY

If the camera was opened from the home screen, only the images taken in that session will be viewable.

SWITCH CAMERA

Tap to switch between the iPhone's rear and front-facing camera.

SHUTTER BUTTON



3 The Three Ingredients to Any Image

How to use light, composition and subject as a tool.



LIGHT

Capturing good light is the most effective way to see improvement in your images. Unfortunately, there is no single type of light that is “good” in every situation. Very generally speaking, good light will: create interest, illuminate your subject adequately, create depth and dimension or shape and contrast.

In digital photography we should generally **expose for the highlights** in our scene. Recovering over-exposed highlight detail in editing is a lot harder than brightening darker shadows. To expose your scene manually, tap the screen where you want to expose and focus. From here, you can drag the sun icon to manually adjust your exposure.

EXERCISE: CHASING LIGHT

Over the course of a week, observe and characterize your lighting conditions to the best of your ability. You can do this mentally or by taking notes. The following week, simply look for those moments when the light is “good” or interesting. Capture at least one image that you’re happy with in this light. At the end of this week, reflect on the images that you took.

IPHONE TIP:

The iPhone excels in bright, high contrast light. Use the HDR feature when you’re capturing a wide spectrum of highlight and shadow or in backlit situations.

COMPOSITION

Composition simply refers to the arrangement of the elements in an image. The use of composition can indicate a photographer’s unique voice or point of view.

The deliberate placement of elements in a frame can create harmony and balance, emphasize or hide certain details, and simplify complex scenes.

Composition is not only an aesthetic tool but a powerful tool for visual storytelling. Elements can be arranged to create a certain emotion or mood, highlight a theme or concept, or draw relationships between certain elements.

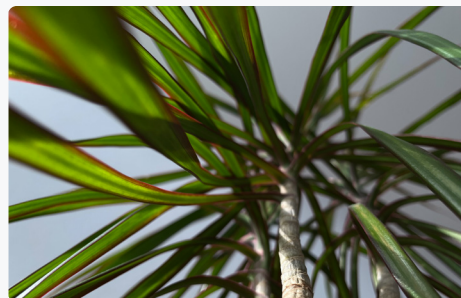
EXERCISE: VIEWPOINT: MOVE YOUR FEET

Select a single subject. Attempt to photograph it from as many different angles and positions as possible. Bigger subjects will allow for more opportunities to explore different compositions. Reflect on the images taken.

IPHONE TIP:

Enable the “grid” on the iPhone’s default camera to assist in composition. **Settings > Camera > Grid (Toggle ON)**

This grid can be used in reference to the Rule of Thirds (p.5) or to simply line up elements in your frame.



SUBJECT

The subject of an image is what the image is about or is portraying. The subject of an image is the main element in an image that draws attention.

Close-up nature photography is an excellent photographic topic, especially for beginners. This topic not only narrows down the potential subject matter to nature but it also forces you to get close. These conditions could be seen as restrictive but I’m sure that you’ll soon find a plethora of potential subjects and images once you start shooting!

EXERCISE: PHOTO-WALK

Embark on a walk with your camera accessible. Every 50-100 paces—stop and push yourself to find a subject to take a picture of from that place.

IPHONE TIP:

Use Live Photos to never miss a spontaneous moment. This feature allows you to select a new frame from the recorded moment at a later time.

Use Burst Mode to capture movement or action.

4 Characteristics of Light

How to classify and describe lighting conditions.

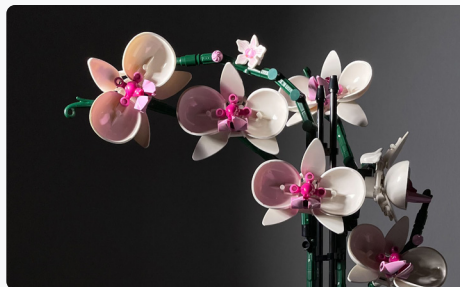
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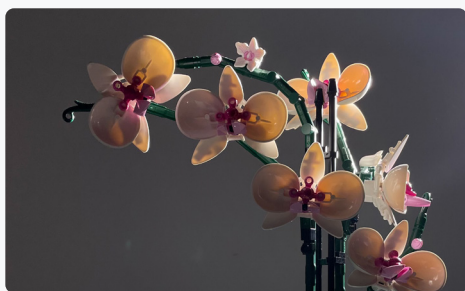
Front Light



Side Light (Left)



Side Light (Right)



Back Light



Top Light



Bottom Light

DIRECTION OF LIGHT

The angle at which light hits your subject or scene plays an important role in not only what parts of your subject/scene are illuminated but the amount of perceived depth and dimension.

Light casts shadows. The direction or prominence of these shadows impacts the perceived depth, dimension and shape of our subjects. When working with **hard light**, it is very important to consider direction since shadows under hard light are more prominent.

The direction of light can be classified as: front light, side light, back light, top light and bottom light (example images).

FOR BEGINNERS: I recommend positioning the subject at a 45° side angle to the light. This will illuminate the front of the subject and provide essential shadow detail.

QUALITY OF LIGHT (SOFT VS. HARD)

Hard light is bare. There is a high contrast between light and shadow. Hard light casts distinct shadows, is often more dramatic and makes texture and shape more pronounced.

Soft light is diffused. There is a low contrast between light and shadow. Soft light casts diffused shadows, is often less dramatic and makes texture and shape less pronounced.



Hard Light



Soft Light

INTENSITY OF LIGHT

Bright light produces high contrast light with, often, deep dark shadows and more saturated colours. The HDR feature can work wonders in this light to expose for both highlight and shadow.

Dimmer light produces low contrast light and less saturation. If light is too dim, digital artifacts known as noise will start to appear and degrade the quality of the image.



Direct Sun Highlight



Dimmer Light (slightly diffused)

COLOUR TEMPERATURE

Colour temperature is a measurement of light's colour, usually represented as a **kelvin** value. The colour temperature of natural light varies depending on the time of day, weather, latitude and season.

Blue Hour is the time of day just before sunrise or just after sunset where there is a faint blue-ish glow from the sun.

Golden Hour occurs during and immediately following sunrise or sunset. The light at this time of day is warm, low in the sky and glowy.

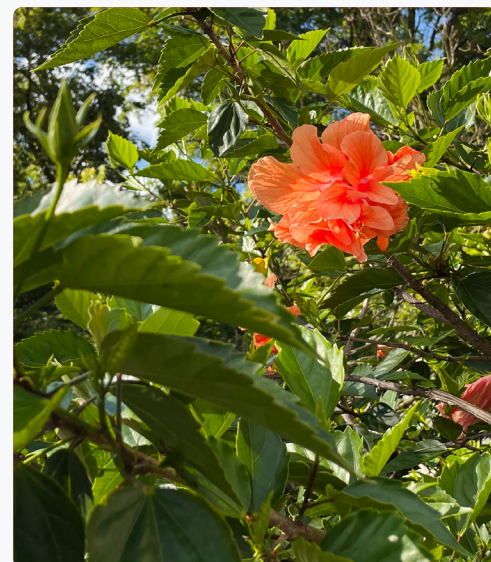
Daylight's colour temperature shifts slightly throughout the day but generally stays in or around neutral colour.



Blue Hour



Daylight



Golden Hour

5 Compositional Guides

Description of the most useful compositional guides for close-up nature.

COMPOSING CLOSE-UP NATURE

When it comes to composing close-up nature photos, the possibilities are truly endless. The smaller subjects in nature provide an opportunity to experiment with unique angles and perspectives and to practice compositional techniques.

When you identify an interesting subject that you want to take a picture of, it's very rare that you're standing in the best position to capture it from. When photographing nature, for the most part, time is on your side. There's never really any rush since the plant, flower, or tree isn't going anywhere! Photographing insects is an exception that may require some quick action.

I have found it extremely useful to remember this when photographing nature. Often, when I find a subject that really interests me, I may spend ten minutes photographing it from different angles until I find the one that highlights it best.

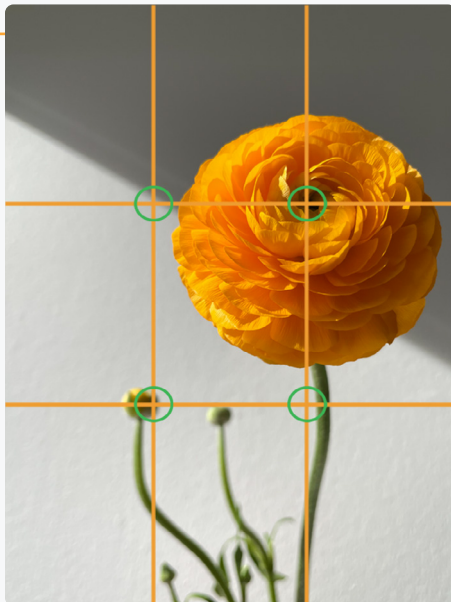
When experimenting with composition, it's useful to break down how you can alter your positioning or viewpoint. From any position, you can move closer to or further away, you can move to the left or right, or you can move higher or lower. Sometimes even small movements can make a big difference to what makes it in or out of your image!



RULE OF THIRDS

The rule of thirds divides an image into three equal rows and columns. The guideline suggests that when elements are placed on these gridlines, the overall composition will feel more harmonious and balanced. The four points where horizontal and vertical lines intersect are considered hot spots where key elements should be placed. The eye is naturally drawn to these areas of an image.

This compositional guide encourages dynamic, asymmetric compositions.



LEADING LINES

This technique uses lines to guide (or lead) the viewer's eye to a subject. In this image example, the light and edge of the tree bark lead the eye to the ant, which is our main subject.

There are many things in nature that can serve as a leading line: tree branches and stems are the most popular. Leading lines do not need to be straight. Some of the most interesting and effective leading lines are not linear.

This compositional guide can help guide the viewer's eye and increase the perceived depth of an image.



FILL THE FRAME

This technique encourages compositions where an element is taking up the entire frame of the image.

In this example, the flower's petals are completely filling the frame and there is no context for the background.

This compositional technique is great for focusing the attention on a single subject, emphasizing pattern or repetition, or capturing textures.

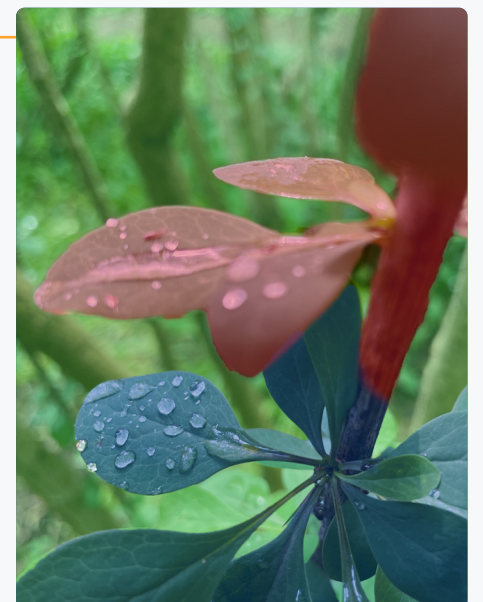


LAYERING

This technique breaks an image down into three separate layers: **foreground**, **middle ground** and **background**. Images that have elements across multiple layers will have more perceived depth and dimension.

These elements can be placed in two similar but distinct ways: **(1)** In distinctly separate layers. This will emphasize shape and form (image example). **(2)** Crossing *through* layers which will draw the viewer's eye *into* the image.

This compositional guide is the best way to add depth and dimension to a flat image.



Subject: Close-Up Nature

How to find interesting close-up subjects in nature.

SUBJECT: CLOSE-UP NATURE

Close-up nature photography holds a special place in my heart. Nature photography is the first subject in photography that I connected with and, like many photographers, it's through nature photography that I first practiced the fundamentals of photography.

The image in the top left is one of my first images that I was truly proud of. My mentor at the time let me experiment with his macro lens for an afternoon in my backyard. Days later he delivered this image to me fully-edited and it really lit a spark to continue pursuing photography.

To this day, I continue returning to nature photography as a way to reconnect with that spark and as a testing ground for new photographic principles, techniques and processes.

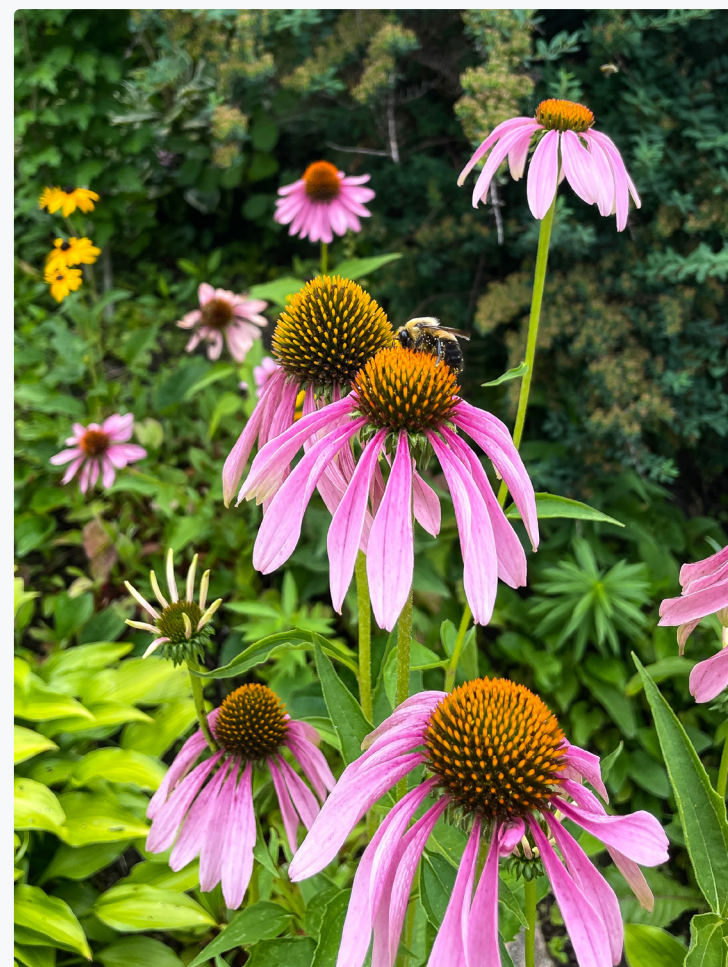
If I had to try to describe the magic of close-up nature photography, I would start with its ability to reveal a whole new world. Nature is all around us and we fool ourselves into believing that we've seen it all but as we move in closer to nature we realize just how complex nature really is.

It could be the iridescent shine of a fly's back, a bumblebee coated in harvested pollen, or rain droplets on spring flowers. There is no shortage of subjects to capture in nature.

The first step is to begin noticing close-up nature subjects. Walking through a nature trail or your neighbourhood park or garden should give you loads of opportunities. The key is to **notice the details**. This is going to require you to get up close and personal with the nature around you. In my own process, it often starts with noticing interesting light and inspecting that area for the subject that lies within it.

In order to get the most out of your exploration of close-up nature photography, I recommend you practice seeing the world with child-like wonder and curiosity. If you have children, you can make this process a lot easier by having your children lead the way on a nature walk or simply watching them engage with the natural world. You may soon find yourself experiencing a similar novelty and adoration. This is by no means only accessible through children. That curious child is within all of us!

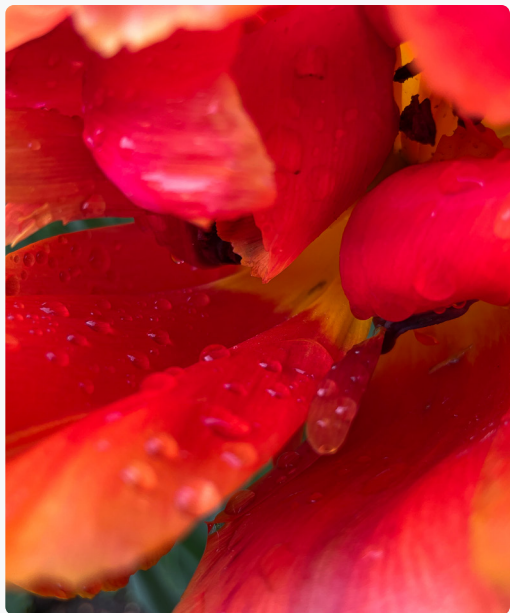
My last piece of advice is to simply get started! As you photograph more close-up nature, you'll start to realize just how many possibilities there are for different subjects, compositions and light. Set aside some time to simply explore and practice seeing the natural world from this new perspective. Once you get comfortable, you can start integrating the fundamentals that we discuss in this course and slowly develop your photographic eye.



7 Close-Up Nature Tips & Tricks

How to capture the best close-up nature photos with an iPhone.

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GETTING CLOSE

The iPhone's built-in camera lens is very wide (24-26mm to be exact). This means that in order to get a close up view on an iPhone we need to get very close to our subjects. Luckily, nature allows for many opportunities to get up close and personal. Often, nature can reveal even more beauty as you get closer to it.

When photographing subjects close-up, small movements will make big changes! This allows you to explore many different viewpoints with the same subject.



FOCUSING/STEADY HAND

Focusing is perhaps the biggest challenge to close-up nature photos. The iPhone's minimum focus distance varies drastically from model-to-model. For an exact figure, conduct a quick web search: "minimum focus distance **insert iPhone model**".

PRO TIP: Find your minimum focus, use your AE/AF lock to lock the focus and then use your camera distance to adjust the focus on your subject.

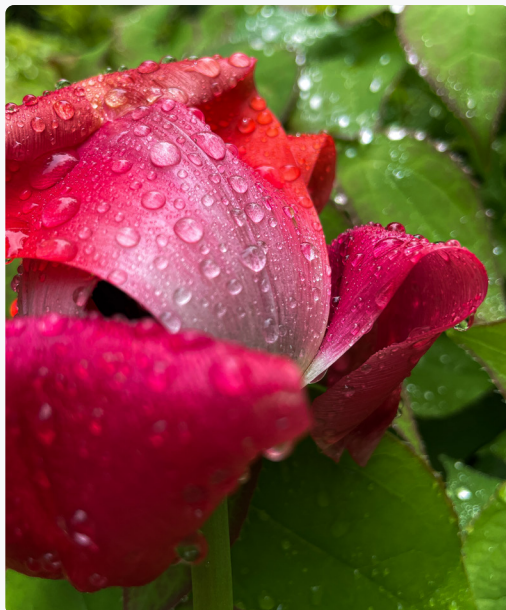
As you get closer to a subject, movement such as camera shake is more apparent. A tripod is the best way to get a steady shot. You can also steady yourself by minimizing your arm extension.

WEATHER

Weather is a very important factor to consider when capturing any type of photography. Not only will the weather drastically affect the lighting conditions but it can even determine what you shoot.

As a beginner, overcast days will provide the best shooting conditions. The light will be soft and relatively even across your scene. This makes it easy to expose for highlight and shadow in a single image and light direction is not as crucial under this type of light.

Light rain can provide incredible opportunities for capturing water droplets on your subjects.



ISOLATION

Isolating the subject of your image is incredibly useful with close-up nature photos, especially when using an iPhone. The wide, deep depth of field inherent to the iPhone's camera doesn't allow for much separation between elements in a frame. Finding ways to isolate or separate the subject in your image can go a long way to focus the attention on your subject.

You can isolate your subject by shooting toward an empty or far-away background. In this image example, The colour contrast of the green trees with the pink flower also helps to isolate and separate the subject from the background.



CONTRAST

Contrast in photography can be used to create visual interest, emphasize certain elements, or create a mood or emotion.

Contrast can be introduced to an image through light (tonal), colour, texture, and even conceptually. Contrast can also be manipulated further in editing.

In this image example, light contrast is being used to focus the attention on the main subject.

Colour contrast is one of the more important forms of contrast to use in nature photography. Look for subjects that contrast against the commonly green/brown environment.



FIND NEW PERSPECTIVES

The iPhone's small form factor opens up many possibilities for experimenting with new and unique perspectives. Use the small size of the iPhone to your advantage by placing it where other cameras cannot go.

This example image is only possible with my iPhone. I was able to place my iPhone right next to the stem of my small plant and shoot directly up which gave me this unique perspective.

PRO TIP: You can achieve an even lower angle by flipping your iPhone upside down and putting your camera lens as close to the ground as possible.

Editing Tools in Photos

Description of the various editing sections and tools within Photos.



Live

The Live section allows the user to set a new “Key Photo”, trim the live photo, or mute the sound of a live photo.

The image must be taken as a live photo in order to access this editing section and make the previously mentioned edits.



Adjust

The Adjust section is the primary editing workspace. This section allows the user to edit the light, colour and detail of their image.

Each tool can be adjusted using a draggable slider which allows for a great degree of control.



Filters

The Filters section allows the user to set one of nine filters on their image. As of iOS16, there are six colour filters and three black and white filters.

The intensity of the filters can be controlled with a draggable slider.



Crop

The Crop section allows the user to crop, rotate, flip and adjust the perspective of an image.

This section also allows users to change the aspect ratio and orientation of an image.

Adjust Section



AUTO

Applies auto-edit to your image.



EXPOSURE

Adjusts brightness of photo. Affects highlights primarily.



BRILLIANCE

When increased, brings out more detail and vibrance in images.



HIGHLIGHTS

Adjusts the brightness of the bright parts in an image.



SHADOWS

Adjusts the brightness of the dark parts in an image.



CONTRAST

Adjusts the range of tones, bright to dark, in an image.



BRIGHTNESS

Adjusts brightness of photo. Affects midtones & shadows primarily.



BLACK POINT

Adjusts the brightness of only the darkest parts in an image.



SATURATION

Globally adjusts colours to be more or less intense.



VIBRANCE

Adjusts intensity of only the less saturated colours in an image and protects skin tones.



WARMTH

Adjusts image to be warmer or cooler.



TINT

Adds a green or magenta tint.



SHARPNESS

Adjusts sharpness of an image by making edges more defined.



DEFINITION

Adjusts the contrast of midtones in an image, improving clarity and texture.



NOISE REDUCTION

Reduces “digital noise” by averaging pixel data.



VIGNETTE

Creates a border around an image (white or black).

Crop Section



STRAIGHTEN

Adjusts the rotation of an image by one degree (-45° to 45°).



VERTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Adjusts the vertical angle of a photo.



HORIZONTAL PERSPECTIVE

Adjusts the horizontal angle of a photo.



ASPECT RATIO

Change aspect ratio and switch between portrait and landscape orientation.



ROTATE

Tap to rotate image 90° (CCW).



FLIP

Tap to flip image horizontally.

Editing Workspace in Photos

Terms related to the photographic process and the iPhone camera.

EDITING SECTION INDICATOR

UNDO

Tap to undo the most recent edit.

TIP

Tap the image at any point in the editing process to compare the original and edited version.

REDO

Tap to redo the most recent edit.

THREE DOTS

Tap to copy and paste edits between separate photos, revert an edited image back to its original state, or change the date, time, or location of the image's metadata.

MARKUP

Tap to write or draw on an image.

This feature allows users to annotate their image with drawing tools and colours.

Tap the + icon to magnify or add a description, text, shapes or signature.

EDITING TOOLS

This is where the editing tools and effects for each section will appear. Scroll to reveal more.

The icon in the centre of the interface will be affected. The name of the tool will appear above its icon.

A draggable slider will appear below that allows control over the selected tool/effect.

AUTO

Cancel

CANCEL

Tap to discard edits.

Done

DONE

Tap to save edits.

ALTERNATE EDITING SECTION

THE EDITING PROCESS

Editing is a crucial part of the digital photography process yet it's something that can intimidate many beginners.

In order to get comfortable with editing it's important to know the tools, understand the many different editing processes and practice, practice, practice!

I highly recommend editing copies of your photos. This will keep an original version of your photo intact and allow you to edit freely without fear of "ruining" a good photo.

This can be done in Photos by first selecting an image, then tapping the **three dots icon** in the top toolbar, then tapping **Duplicate**. This can be done as many times as the storage on your phone will allow for.

It can be easy to get carried away with editing, especially as a beginner. There is no shortage of editing tools to use on our photos but that doesn't mean we should be using all of them all of the time! Practice restraint and constantly

check back on your un-edited photo to see if you've gone too far with an edit. You can develop your taste for editing by studying or dissecting the photography that you consume in your everyday life.

Editing is a process of problem-solving. As a beginner, it's no easy task to identify all of the problems in an image from the start of an edit. Instead, start with one problem and in the process of fixing that issue, you will likely notice another problem to solve and so on until your image is problem-free!

Editing is largely intuitive and does not follow a linear path. There is no recipe or formula that works in every situation. Develop a strong foundation for your editing process and that will support any image editing that you do in the future.

Have fun and enjoy the editing process! Sometimes it's fun to push the boundaries of these tools beyond their intended purpose just for the sake of it. Don't be afraid to "mess things up" every now and then!

IMAGE SELECTION

The first and, perhaps, most crucial step in the photo editing process. Keep an open mind when sorting through a batch of images. It can help to slowly shrink a large batch down to the good ones, then the best ones and finally the few stand out images.



CROPPING

The importance of cropping cannot be over-stated! This is a second chance to re-compose your image and should be done carefully. Consider how your crop can fine-tune the balance and composition of your image.



EXPOSURE CORRECTION

This is a process of correcting the exposure of an image so that there is adequate detail across the spectrum of highlight, midtone and shadow. Slight under or over exposure can work as a creative tool when used appropriately.



DYNAMIC RANGE

By darkening the highlights and brightening the shadows of an image, you can increase the perceived dynamic range. This process will bring out more detail across the spectrum of highlight, midtone and shadow in an image.



WHITE BALANCE

It's very common for auto white balance systems to render images too warm or cold or with a noticeable green or magenta tint. Before applying any colour edits, it's a good practice to adjust white balance to a neutral point.



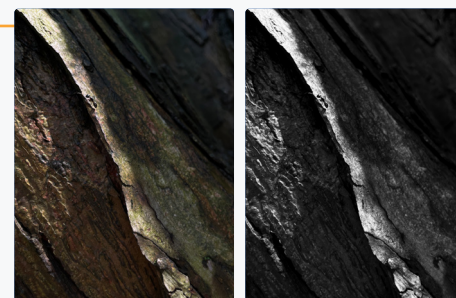
COLOUR CORRECTION

This is a process of adjusting the colours in your image to better match what they look like naturally. When colour correcting nature photos, be cautious of over or under saturating.



BLACK AND WHITE

Black and White processing desaturates all colours in an image. This process allows you to explore tonal contrast and dynamic range much more. Black and White processing can include subtle tints of colour.



USE CONTRAST EFFECTIVELY

Contrast can work wonders to make a dull image POP and focus the attention on the subject of an image. If the light is too **dull**— increase the contrast. If the light is too **harsh**— decrease the contrast.



FILTERS/PRESETS

Filters/Presets are a great place to start an edit. They're a quick way to achieve a certain look and can automate a lot of the editing process we previously discussed. Just be sure to fine-tune the intensity.



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