



Photography Workshop with Michael Downey of Unique Photo

For those unable to attend Michael Downey's informative photography workshop in Avis Campbell Gardens, here are highlights, definitions, and tips to help you take great photographs in the garden and out in the landscape.

You don't have to use these techniques if you're not comfortable with them. You can still produce an eye-catching image no matter what type of camera you use. Your unique perspective, creative eye and thoughtful composition are the most important elements.

"It's not what you're looking at that matters, it's what you see." Henry David Thoreau

Your camera, whether a smartphone, point and shoot, or SLR, is recording light: its quantity, direction, and color. Understanding and controlling these factors will result in powerful photos

ISO – is a setting that dictates a camera's sensitivity to light. Film is assigned an ISO rating. With a digital camera, the setting applies to the digital sensor. The higher the ISO number, the more sensitive the sensor is to light. For low light and night photography, use a high ISO setting. For bright conditions, use a low ISO setting.

A difficult time of day to shoot photos outside is when you are taller than your shadow. The bright sunlight of midday can produce harsh shadows and excessive contrast.

APERTURE – also called F-stop, determines the depth of field or how much of the image is in focus. A small aperture lets in a small amount of light and a big aperture allows more light to reach the sensor. Important: the bigger the number (e.g. f/22), the smaller the aperture opening. More of what you see will be in focus, including the subject and the background. When set at a smaller number (e.g. f/2.8) the aperture opening is wider and less of what you see will be in focus.

Take pictures of pollinators when it is cool outside as their movement is slower.

SHUTTER SPEED – The shutter opens and closes at various speeds to let in more or less light. The aperture opening and the shutter control how much light reaches the image sensor. Speed is measured in fractions of a second, (eg. 1/250th). Fast shutter speeds freeze action and are typically used in bright light. Slow shutter speeds will record movement and are used in low light.

The closer you are to your subject; the greater the amount of motion recorded.

WHITE BALANCE (WB) can be manipulated to adjust temperature (warm or cool) of light source.

A reflector gives you more control over light. Holding the reflector below the subject will increase the amount of light; holding the reflector above the subject will make the light more diffuse.

Camera Plus app, for Iphone7 and later, allows some photo settings to be manipulated.

LANDSCAPES - A low ISO and high F-stop will keep foreground, middle ground and background relatively in focus. Use leading lines in the composition to focus on the subject of the scene.

Color and shape will evoke emotional response. Patterns will evoke stability. A break in a pattern will tell the viewer where to look. Texture can be exaggerated by contrasting with adjacent texture.

THE RULE OF THIRDS – when composing the photo, divide what you see in the viewfinder into thirds vertically and horizontally (imagine a grid with 9 parts) and then consider placing points of interest at one of the intersections defining the center part. Similarly, place horizontal or vertical elements of the image along one of the horizontal or vertical lines of the grid to help balance the photograph.

"No right or wrong, no good or bad, I'm just saying what's so." Michael Downey

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