

Rose Photography

Creativity, Inspiration, Reward, Resources

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Inspiration: My inspiration for garden photography came about through attending a lecture at the Marin Art and Garden Center in Ross (presented by Saxon Holt, photographer, story teller, garden enthusiast), and Sally Long of San Diego, who was the pioneer of rose photography for the American Rose Society. She led the development of the “Guidelines for Judging Rose Photography” we use today.

Creativity: What they both had in common was an appreciation for beauty of nature in the garden and an eye for the shot. They both followed the basic principles of photography: the importance of light, experimentation, and the joys of garden photography, and a meditative process resulting in images that tell a story about how the garden or nature makes you feel.

Rewards: Many of you think you don't have the skill, time, or equipment to create a great image that captures the moment and the interest of someone looking at your image. If you have a smartphone and a garden of your own, or access to a public garden, you have all the equipment you need. Today's smartphones do all the work for you. They have all the software editing functions embedded; even stabilization is busy at work while you simply hit the button. It is well known that being outdoors in nature is a mood and energy enhancing experience for those who take advantage of that opportunity. You only need to have your phone charged and be ready to go.

Explore the garden looking for your own insight. Try to find something interesting: new angle, some provocation or intrigue, whimsical, distinctive, or unexpected in your garden. Investigate the details, look for the unusual, challenge yourself to see things new. Let your pictures tell a story. All pictures of roses are pretty but you want the

picture that keeps drawing you back to look at time and time again. **Sunlight** is the key that opens the door to great photographs.

Spring is the best time for rose photography because the foliage is lush, hiding distractions that can take away from award winning photography. The usual garden photography challenges of chewing insects, yellowed leaves, blackspot, and powdery mildew have not yet appeared on the scene.

Start Practicing Now

Get to know the best time for lighting in your garden.

Take lots of shots, only keeping the best two or three shots of the rose and delete the rest. If it did not capture your eye, you can bet the judge will pass it by as well. This is the number one mistake smartphone photographers make, keeping all 20 shots you take of the same moment. This fills your storage capacity.

Create and organize your photos into “2026 Keepers.” This will help when preparing your photos for the show.

Helpful Photography Tips

1. Clean Your Lens/Lenses

Before you begin, take a soft eyeglass cleaning cloth, with no water or cleaning solution, and lightly go over the lens/lenses on the back of your smartphone. I do this every time before I go out to take pictures. Amazing how focus and clarity of your photos improve.

2. Focus your smartphone

Touch the center of your phone and a small square will appear. Tap on it and that will focus the camera on what you want, not what the phone wants to focus on.

3. Working with Light

Light is the most important aspect of photography. The best time to photograph is early morning or late afternoon. You can use your body to block the harsh sun if attempting midday shots. You can also use the flash option, which, if taking shots within close range, will eliminate the shadows created by bright sunlight. **Always have the flash function turned off unless in full sun when photographing roses.** The flash can distort the true color of the bloom.

4. Begin with a nice bloom or spray

Groom your rose before you take the first shot. If after taking the picture you notice distractions, groom for a better second shot. **You must have the name of the rose on your entry tag.** When taking a shot, take a picture of the rose label, name of the public rose garden, and for rose arrangements, the name of the arranger. If you don't know the name of the rose, do your best to look on "Help Me Find," use an AI search, or any other means to find a name of a rose that looks like the one you took a picture of.

5. Eliminate background distractions.

6. Allow breathing room around your shot

Another common mistake with rose photography is to take the largest photo you can of the rose. The problem is that you do not want the rose touching the edges of the frame (point deduction when judged). This will also leave you no room to crop the shot if you chose to do that to enhance your photograph.

"It is important to note that photographs of roses within a garden setting are strongly encouraged. Some photographs will look better with a more natural background than a plain black background. Beware of the "floating bloom" as it can be distracting for some exhibits. Seeing the rose framed by foliage is a more natural setting and will be rewarded."

7. Use a tripod to **stabilize your shots**.

If you don't have a tripod, hold the camera close to your face, not with your arms outstretched.

8. **Zoom with your feet, not your fingers.** Digital zooming "pinching" motion reduces the number of pixels, causing lower clarity and grainy pixelated photos when printed.

9. **"Wow Factor."** This will separate you from the competition. Let creativity guide your photography.

10. **Read and familiarize yourself with the Photography Show Schedule.**

5 points are awarded to your entry for Conformance.

11. **Ask for constructive feedback before and after a competition.**

The more often you enter photography, the better your shots will be in the future.

Most importantly, get outside: have fun, enjoy your garden, a friend's garden, or public garden, and let the creative juices be your guide.

Printing

You can crop up to 50%, but make sure you select 4:5 or 3:2 aspect ratios, which are the best for printing. Otherwise, when you send off the photo to print, it might return with parts of the rose cut off. *Print on glossy photo paper.*