# Photographing Signs of Spring (SoS)

**MAPS Presentation**

**April, 2023**

Jack Carlson, Photography Instructor
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## Agenda

Welcome

Media Sources

Camera Gear Resources-New and Used

Assessing light levels: Subtle or Dramatic

Color: The Spice of an Image
General Concepts
Flower Color Tips
Buds, Berries and Cones

The Spring Photo Quiz

The Spring DIY Challenge

Q and A

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## 7 General Garden Photo Concepts to Remember (4.23 Rev.)

1. **Decide on a subject, then decide on the focus.** Finding a suitable subject for an image is often the most time-consuming part of capturing it. Remember that everything in the scene need not be in super-sharp focus. Distracting elements around the subject can be made less prominent by increasing the aperture or cropped out by using a vertical perspective.

2. The **camera sensor meters the lightest and darkest areas of a scene** and combines them to form an average exposure. If you don't agree with the light level of the image, hold down the exposure compensation (+/-) button and turn the thumb wheel. If your camera has no button, find the exposure comp scale on the LCD screen, or move the pointer on the scale to slightly increase or decrease the exposure.

3. **For maximum sharpness** throughout an image:
    a. set the camera to Aperture mode
    b. use a small aperture (higher number)
    c. manually focus the subject

4. **A smaller aperture** requires a longer exposure time.

5. **When you're out early**, there is (usually) less wind and heat. Plus the sun won't provide harsh, direct light on your subject.

6. **Use a low ISO setting on your camera for maximum image quality**. A setting around 100 ISO may require a camera support. Read the following point.

7. **A tripod eliminates camera movement during long exposure times.** Excessive caffeine consumption creates short shutter speeds.

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## 10 Points for Dramatic Light (4.23)

1. Evaluate the light on and around the subject. Then determine the appropriate metering pattern.

2. Meter for the brightest parts of the scene to hold those light levels.

3. Try spot metering—especially for small subjects.

4. Create a sun-star (at f22+) when the disc is the only thing in the sky.

5. Center-weighted metering works well in large, dark areas of a scene.

6. Matrix/evaluative metering works when there is an even light : shadow ratio

7. Use repeating areas of light and shadows as lead-lines.

8. Take time to arrange shadow placement in the frame.

9. Small shadows require manual focus and (quite often) some form of camera support.

10. In any light level, use the lowest possible ISO setting.

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## Pros & Cons of Subtle Light (4.23)

**Subtle**—light that's found when sun is at least partially obscured. It may require an adjustment in exposure compensation setting, but not usually a change in ISO. Shutter speeds could be extended.

***Pros:***
--softens colors
--mutes/understates colors
--allows better recognition of pastel tones
--good for capturing color shadings of flowers
--works well with large apertures

***Cons:***
--reduces/eliminates bold colors
--may obscure textural differences
--often found during fog,rain or mist
--can require extended shutter speeds with low ISO and small apertures
--holds down light level contrast in monochrome images

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## Color: The Spice of an Image

### A Thumbnail History

Photography is a means of visual communication that has evolved through various methods of collecting and fixing an image on to metal, glass, or paper. From the time of Joseph Niepce's first black and white fixed image on a pewter plate in 1826, photographers have worked to add contrast and stability to images. Just over 50 years later, in 1877, Louis Ducos du Hauron was able to combine cyan, yellow and magenta filters to create the first in a series of images that added color to a scene.

In the mid 1960's, color film gradually became the norm for the images captured by most people. Professional photographers began to shoot with digital equipment in the mid 1990's while the rest of the photographic community (us) became overwhelmed by massive ad campaigns from international camera makers and slowly "went digital."

Digital color images were, at first, not equal to those taken with film, simply because digital cameras did not have enough recording power (i.e. picture elements or pixels) to completely record a scene. We now have digital cameras in smart phones that record small to moderately sized but perfectly acceptable, full-color images in addition to cameras with 24-75 megs of resolution. Medium format digital cameras (i.e. Hasselblad) now provide up to 100 mgs.

### Color in Your Images

When planning what scene to record, decide whether to photograph bright or subdued colors. Use the following points to help guide your decision:

Bright Colors
--add interest to a scene with flat (no point source) light
--can be used to add excitement to an image
--give energy to a scene that needs a focal point

Subtle Colors
--keep an image subdued
--can enhance a gray day with a calming effect
--are often ignored in favor of those which are vivid and highly saturated
--require additional time to photograph their gradual shadings

# Qualities of Color

There are 3 basic components of any color.
Hue: the name
Brightness: the light or dark level
Saturation: the purity level

## Primary Colors

RED – Intense and solid.
Found in sun, fire, heat sources
Associated with aggression, danger

YELLOW – Brightest color
Found in sun, butter, distant light sources
Associated with cheerfulness and cleanliness

BLUE – Fairly dark, definitely cool
Found in sky, water
Associated with air, cool things, wetness

## Secondary Colors

These are opposite on the wheel from primary colors. They are composed of blends of the primaries.

GREEN (Complementary color Red)
Found in all forms of nature
Associated with growth, hope and progress
Violet (Complementary color Yellow)
Found in flowers, otherwise very rare
Associated with royalty
Orange (Complementary color Blue)
Found in flowers, sun rises/sets
Associated with fire, heat and dryness

## Images with color

Adding some color to an otherwise bland photo provides a focus point in the image. Color also adds interest through contrast. Slight under exposure compensates for the digital camera's inherent brightening of each scene. This under exposure provides a visual saturation of colors and adds to the contrast level. This can be done by using the exposure compensation (+/-) button or finding this setting in the menu.
Expose for the subject and let the surrounding light levels go where they may.

Will color help the subject?

Or

Will color become the subject?

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## 7 Tips for Photographing Flower Colors

**1.** Be mindful that colors can shift in the flower/rose (or vegetable) garden. Begin with an exposure compensation setting of -.3 as a base. Then decrease (reduce light) the setting for dark colors. Remember to check out the dominant light source in any scene and change the white Balance (WB) as required.

**2.** Extremely bright colors that are often highly saturated and pure. These colors easily transform themselves into other colors that appear different in the camera's viewfinder or live-view setting.

**3.** Red produces very strong wavelengths that can easy take over a photograph and cause blobs, spots, other strange phenomenon in photography. Bright saturated reds are best handled by reducing light in the exposure comp setting.

**4.** In confined areas, the color of the surrounding buildings or other things outside can be reflected onto your subject affecting the color.

**5.** In bright, noon light, some darker colors can also be affected. Dark burgundy can become bright reddish purple and not the deep color that's associated with egg plant. Use full-spectrum (aka sunlight) to photograph these colors but be mindful of the intensity of the light. A partially shaded area is often best for these colors. Travel with some type of scrim or shade to be certain you can reduce the light intensity when needed.

**6.** Many items are not just one color. What appears to be bluish green to a naked eye under the magnification of a camera in macro zoom can have extra spots of yellowish green.

**7.** Almost every leaf, or flower petal has veins of many different tones, tints, shades. When these and other colors blend, the result is not usually pure colors.

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## Photographing Buds, Berries and Cones

Settings that are useful for all small subjects will be appropriate here. Since the cones and berries are often found in subdued light, there are additional settings that should be taken into consideration.

This list contains settings common to all small subjects (excluding humans and their pets) and should be considered before taking a picture of cones or berries.

**When photographing (most) small subjects:**

–use a close-up filter, macro lens, or extension tubes to isolate the subject from its surroundings
--be certain that there is sufficient light on the subject
--small apertures and small subjects are good companions
--small subjects can often require a form of camera support
--use a shutter release or set the self-timer to prevent camera shake

**When photographing cones or berries:**

--look for diffused/soft light to reduce glare and highlight blowout
--reduce harsh shadows by using a reflective white card or mirror to direct some light on to the subjects, especially cones
--use basic composition rule-of-thirds to place small subjects in the frame
--consider using vertical perspective when photographing single cone
--use manual focus to ensure desired d-o-f sharpness
--under-expose to saturate color of berries
--snow adds interest and depth to cones on branches
--reduce coffee consumption before photographing any small subject

**When photographing buds:**

--the soft and muted colors look best in early morning light
--decide the number of buds included in the scene will determine the f stop
--photograph a single bud with the max aperture on the lens
--use a polarizing filter to darken the sky behind the subject(s)

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## Self-quiz on Camera Controls and Thinking

1. Against your better judgement, you actually find yourself on the ground in fervent hope of getting a keeper shot of those crocuses that are both close to the camera and those in the middle distance. **What should be done to have the entire scene in sharp focus? Is anyone available to help you get up?**

2. Individual buds have become your favorite objects to photograph during this season. When you try to fill the frame with these images, they never seem to be in sharp focus—especially when viewed in large size on your computer. What could be wrong? **What will improve the sharpness of these pictures?**

3. It's Saturday morning and the sun is out so you've decided to get out with your new insulated coffee mug in addition to camera gear. That colorful tulip blossom you noticed yesterday will be a perfect subject, but the disc of the sun is right behind it. **What should you use to prevent the flower from becoming a silhouette?**

4. This spring afternoon is bright but gray and sadly, last night's forecast was correct: it did rain after midnight. You recall that water drops add interest to flowers so why not get a picture or two**. What's to do before you "push the button"?**

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## S o S Photo Challenge (4.23)

Design and capture a Signs of Spring image that will make the viewer want to visit the site—wherever it may be.

**Accessibility**
When walking to the subject, see if that area can be used as a lead-line.

**Attractiveness—Surrounding area**
Assess the color and texture around the subject to see how much of the area warrants inclusion.

**Flowers and Trees**
If trees are part or all of your subject, look for colorful planting beds around the base of them. Check the difference in scale between the flowers and trees.

**Human presence in image**
Could a relative be induced to walk into the picture? Neighbors are often more amenable – especially if they don't know you well.

**H or V**
Check the scene in both perspectives. If neither make visual sense, don't push the button.

**Relationships**
Look for a good relationship between subjects.

**Timing of shoot / possibility of return**
Does the light help the subject? Would 7 am or perhaps 7 pm be an improvement ?

**Views around your subject**
Crop out unwanted areas by moving, zooming the lens or using the vertical perspective to include just the right number of Signs of Spring.

**Views from your subject**
Some Signs of Spring could be behind you. Remember to turn around.

**Wide-angle Warning**
The wide-angle lens was developed to put the viewer in the scene. Avoid the "get it all in" thought, since that usually reduces the subject size. Get thyself closer.