



Everyone can experience Roses

Roses are a multi-dimensional passion. Beyond growing roses, they are used in many ways and forms to express, enjoy, and entertain.

'Route 66' by Susan B. Graham

ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY FOR EVERYONE

Taking photos of roses in your garden, roses in someone else's garden or just any beautiful rose can become a way of sharing, expression, and enjoying roses. These simple tips will help your rose photos reflect the beauty and color you are experiencing in person with the rose.

article and photos

by Susan Brandt Graham, MD, PhD

If you are reading this ARS Rose Annual, you must enjoy roses. Even if you read the Annual mainly for information about growing roses, I suspect most of you enjoy seeing the pictures of roses too. Have you tried photographing roses yet? I have met many of you who do photograph roses, but I have also met some of you who are reluctant to give it a try. In 2018, good phone cameras, along with other digital cameras, make photography for everyone a real possibility. And, it can be a fun way to enjoy your roses.

In 2004 I bought my first digital camera strictly as a lightweight, easily-portable alternative to my film camera to photograph roses at shows I was judging. In 2018, of course, we would all just use our phone cameras. The images were made as snapshots for personal enjoyment. That was a very good use for that camera, and I wore it out over four years. It died while I was photographing roses in the garden of friends. During those four years, I built a personal website (<http://swdesertgardening.com/>) to talk about gardening, especially roses, and used many of those snapshots there. Although I have not updated that site in over a year, many of those old snapshots still get regular hits. People enjoy looking at images of roses. I wore out my second digital camera doing a two-year program in Digital Photography as I was working on the ARS Pacific Southwest District Photography Guidelines. Today I use my fourth digital camera at least several times a week. Each photograph teaches me something new. But the most important thing is having fun: having fun with another dimension for enjoying roses through photography.

Working with Light

Photography: literal from the Greek, “writing with light.” Light is the single most important component in photography. Is there one right way to use light in photography? No. How you use light depends on what



you want to express in your image. And that will depend not only on the subject of the image, but also the personal preferences of the person creating it – you. For example, landscape photographs often benefit from harsh shadows, at least here in the Desert Southwest. For floral photography, however, my personal preference is soft, natural light in the outdoor setting in which the roses are growing. However, you may find you prefer flash lighting for your rose images, especially if you enjoy photographing them indoors after you have cut them. And flash becomes almost required in an indoor rose show setting.

The only way to learn what lighting “style” is for you is to create many photographs as you experiment with different techniques and settings. This should be fun as you are out in gardens enjoying roses. Along the way, other rosarians will be willing to offer assistance. Take the suggestions you find useful. Avoid those who insist there is only one right way to do things. Photography is a creative activity, and your vision may be different from someone else’s. Expressing your vision

of roses – or anything else – can be very rewarding.

If you have not tried photographing roses before, or even if you have, try experimenting with light. One beauty of digital cameras, including phone cameras, is that you can try using flash and no flash on the same subject and immediately compare the results. And you can photograph a rose as it grows, and if it is yours, you may then cut it and try photographing it in a more controlled setting.

While light is the single most important component in photography in general, the rose itself, of course, is a very important component of rose photography. How you approach this as a photographer will depend to a large extent upon whether you are in your own garden or someone else’s. If you are a rosarian who grows your own, you probably are out in your garden daily looking at what is there and doing basic grooming such as disbudding, deadheading, and so forth. You watch the roses as they develop and know when they are close to reaching that perfect stage at which you plan





to photograph them. You may even start photographing a day or two early and continue until you have achieved the image you planned. This is a great way to practice with your camera, as well as to learn more about your roses. Trying different times of the day also lets you see when the light is most pleasing to you for your rose images.

Photographing in public gardens or other people's gardens is a bit more challenging. A neighbor might let you do a little grooming, but not a public garden. Times you can be in other gardens may be limited, giving you less control over lighting. If you find the perfect rose but it has harsh light and shadows across it, try adding flash to fill in the shadows; that is one possible solution. My own typical solution is to stand to create a shadow over the rose, which is then lit with a gentle light. There are many simple light modifiers, especially if you have a second person with you. The shade you use to cover your windshield when parked makes a perfect shade for a bloom in bright sun. If you have your camera on a tripod, you can hold such a light modifier on your own. The more you photograph in different conditions, the more solutions you will add to your bag of tricks. And that adds to the fun of photography.

Composition

Composition refers to the arrangement of objects in an image to guide the eye. "Rule of Thirds" is a useful way to organize an image, one seen often. Imagine the image divided into three vertical sections and three horizontal sections. The major point of interest would be placed at one of the four spots where the dividing lines intersect. An example here would be "Stamens of Gemini" on the previous page.

Many other compositional principles exist that can add interest to photographs. The "Golden Spiral" is based on mathematics in Nature. But you do not have to learn the math if you do not want to. Photographs of sunflowers are a natural for this composition, as is anything that grows in a spiral, such as the shells of some sea creatures. Think about this for a minute: blooms of roses unfurl in a spiral. A full-petalled rose such as a hybrid tea, especially if it has a good center, can be effectively presented using this compositional principle. An example is 'Gemini,' shown above, photographed using macro technique.

One of my favorite compositions is "The Diagonal." Diagonal lines naturally add movement to an image. An example here is 'Austrian Copper.' 'Mermaid' combines both Diagonal and Rule of Thirds.

LEFT: A macro shot of 'Gemini' brings the eye in to the beauty of its central spiral.

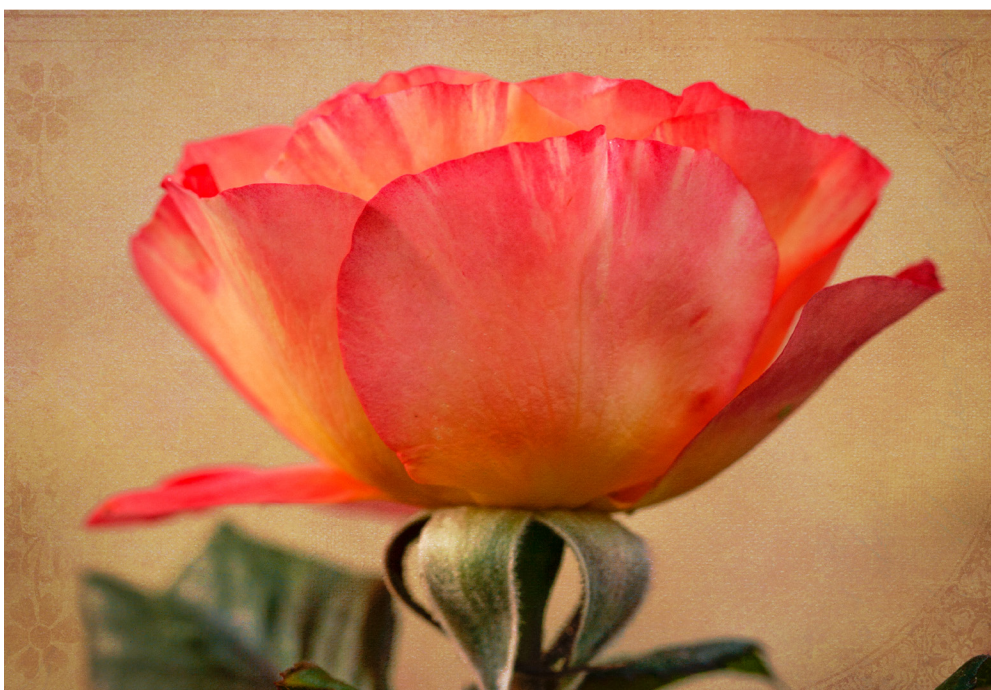
TOP RIGHT: 'Mermaid' combines both the Rule of Thirds and Diagonal composition.

MIDDLE RIGHT: 'Chihuly' uses symmetry in its photo composition and is also edited with creative post-production techniques.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A stem of 'Austrian Copper' uses the diagonal line composition technique to add movement to the image.

PAGE: 66: Having your smart phone with you creates opportunities to take photos of roses wherever you are. This rose caught my eye while I was out, and I was able to capture its beauty quickly and easily so I could share this moment of pleasure. This image would not easily fit in current classes of ARS Guidelines for Judging Rose Photography in rose shows. But telling different stories of roses with different viewpoints is just part of the fun of it all!

PAGE 67: Stamens of 'Gemini' use the Rule of Thirds to create a major point of interest.





“Symmetry” can also be effective and pleasing. Examples of this are the spray, ‘Route 66,’ shown on the left and the creatively edited ‘Chihuly’ on the previous page.

“Fill the Frame” has long been a favorite for catalog shots of roses. ‘Foolish Pleasure’, the left middle photo on this page is an example of that.

This is not an exhaustive list, and you may find others useful in your photography of roses.

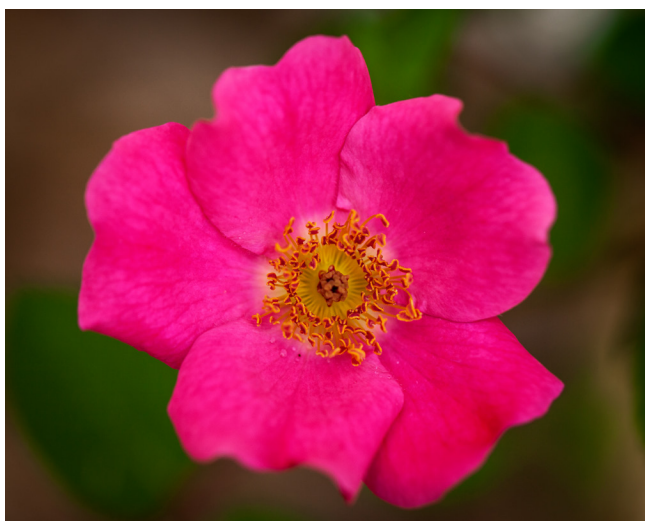
Finding Perfection in Imperfection and Adding Interest

What about times you find a scene appealing or an “imperfect” rose has a characteristic you particularly like? Make the photograph and wait until you see it on your computer before you make a final decision about what to do with it.

The ‘Chihuly’ shown on the previous page has a drooping petal and is not open to a stage that would be shown in a rose show. However, the color is wonderful and shows how that particular rose got its name. “Another rose I saw while out walking” on page 66 is a rose image I would not take to a rose show because currently there is not an appropriate Class in which to enter it (although schedule writers can add classes, as long as they are judged by the Guidelines). Both images serve as reminders that not all roses have to be trophy table winners to be beautiful. There are so many different ways to create a pleasing image.

There are so many different ways to create a pleasing image when combining roses, light, and composition. Every person sees things a little differently. The way for you to learn your “style,” what is pleasing to you, is to photograph as often as possible. Take advice that you find useful, but create images that you like.

Photography presents one way to enjoy roses. Some of you may enjoy it simply for your own pleasure. Others may enjoy sharing roses on the internet. And, some of you may decide to exhibit some of your rose photographs in an ARS rose show. I think the overwhelming majority of you will be glad you picked up your camera and gave rose photography a try, no matter what you ultimately decide to do with your images.



TOP LEFT: Symmetry balances this photo of ‘Route 66.’ MIDDLE LEFT: ‘Foolish Pleasure’ fills the frame. BOTTOM LEFT: The bright stamens of this rose caught my eye while I was out walking one day.



'Incognito'

ADDING ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY ACTIVITIES TO THE AGENDA

ENCOURAGING ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY: THE ROLE OF LOCAL SOCIETIES

There is no question that rose photography is a fun and rewarding experience. Now it's time to incorporate rose photography into local society activities. This brings a well-rounded rose experience to members, and potential new members too!

article and photos by Susan Brandt Graham, MD, PhD

What ways can we offer for rose photographers, whether or not they are exhibitors, to participate in relevant, enjoyable activities around roses and photography?

Local societies can offer members many ways to show their rose images, and without those images being judged by standards of an ARS rose show. 2018 presents a challenge for local societies to both experiment with and encourage innovation and creativity within their group. Many local societies have been doing this for some time, with good success.

Some local societies have made a point of offering times at their meetings for display of member images, in an informal way. This can be done many different ways. The more options offered over a year, the more the likelihood of participation increases. One way this can be done is to have a place at which members can lay out a few of their photographs before the meeting. Then, at the break, interested members can view and discuss them. These could be small images, not matted or mounted, but shown informally for interest and discussion.

To keep these displays and discussions fresh, the local society might wish to have different “themes” for different meetings, announced ahead of time. Some examples might be:

- Favorite Roses,
- Once-Blooming Roses,
- Roses and Companion Plants,
- My New Roses,
- Stamens,
- Roses I Will Shovel Prune this Year,
- Macro Photography, and
- I Wouldn't Enter This Photo in a Rose Show, But I Want to Show It to You, etc.

Lady Banks Rose
R. banksiae lutea



Corrales Rose Society

2018



Dr Huey



Corrales Rose Society

2018



Since the discussion would take place at break time, people not interested in photography could be having their favorite-topical discussions with friends in a different part of the room. If photographers were regularly offered a way to informally show some of their images at each meeting, I suspect more and more people would gradually gravitate to those discussions because “a picture is worth a thousand words.”

For local societies that have technical capabilities, finding a way for members to send their photos directly from their mobile phones to a laptop and projector at a meeting, can make it easy and spontaneous for members to share photos.

Rose photography in ARS rose shows is still fairly new in some parts of the country. Now that the Guidelines have been formally established and as District Photography Chairs begin to assist in “spreading the word” to local societies, more people may become interested in “trying their hands” in an ARS show. I think that is especially true if local societies encourage all types and levels of rose photography in informal ways such as those discussed above.

One way to encourage members with an interest in rose photography and who want to move to the next level is to hold a “practice rose photography show.” Some societies are already effectively doing this, often during the winter months, when colorful images of roses are especially appreciated. ARS photography awards would not be given, although local prizes could be given if the society holding it wished to. Practice shows present an opportunity for experienced members to teach simple techniques of mounting and matting, how

judging by the ARS Guidelines is done, and to give budding photographers confidence.

Once sufficient interest exists locally, a true ARS Rose Photography Show could be held by itself in the winter (or any other time), with ARS judges and ARS photography awards, following the Guidelines. Not all local societies can be expected to have an interest in doing this, but for those that do, it can be a great way to grow participation.

Another way to stimulate interest in rose photography is to encourage photographs of locally interesting roses. For example, each May the Village of Corrales is filled with blooming ‘Dr. Huey’s’ for two weeks, many of significant size. The beauty of survival in this sometimes-harsh land is celebrated by the Corrales Rose Society with a tour at peak bloom. The tour is a time for fellowship, photography, and fun.

As I finish writing, I realize it has been almost ten years to the day that I began working on possible guidelines for judging photography in rose shows. That ten years was a long haul, but one thing that never wavered was my love of roses and photography.

The work that lies ahead is to encourage in a positive manner participation at the local level. I have suggested only a few ways in this article, and many, many, more possibilities exist.

Wishing you good light and beautiful roses.

ABOVE: The fun and beauty of the roses is captured on these photo scrapbook pages from the Corrales Rose Society tour in May 2018.