



# BLOOMING GREAT GARDEN PHOTO TIPS

Society members shortlisted in the recent International Garden Photographer of the Year competition reveal some secrets of their craft. By Geoff Harris LRPS



## POLINA PLOTNIKOVA ARPS

Highly Commended: Photo Projects, Monochrome

[polinaplotnikova.com](http://polinaplotnikova.com)

My approach to flower photography is somewhat similar to that of a portrait photographer – for every flower and plant, I try to find its unique look, study its mood and character, and ultimately unlock its hidden beauty.

Also, a good floral portrait – unlike a purely botanical illustration – triggers

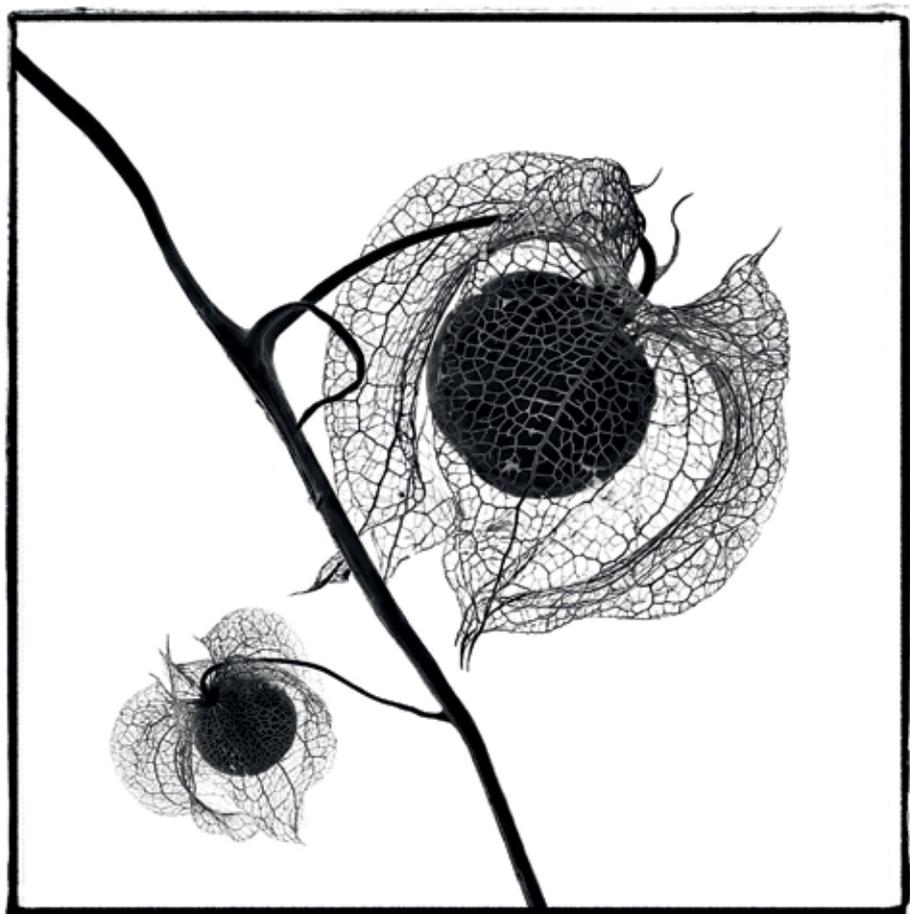
a thought or emotion in the viewer's mind. I like a limited colour palette and work a lot in monochrome; in the absence of colour, you need to concentrate on lines, shapes and tonality.

I work in my home studio, and studio flower photography is great for a perfectionist. Nobody fidgets or makes faces, your models

don't talk back to you, and no sudden gust of wind or other quirk of ever-changing weather can spoil your shot.

But, by the same token, you cannot count on something interesting that just happens all of a sudden.

It is all up to you; the choices are infinite, the result entirely in your hands.



**G**arden photography is more popular than ever, as the high quality of entries submitted to International Garden Photographer of the Year (IGPOTY) confirms. Since it was started in 2007 by five members of the Garden Photographers' Association, IGPOTY has blossomed.

The competition is now run in association with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and attracts entrants from all over the world.

The IGPOTY main exhibition is also held annually at Kew, with a rolling programme of touring exhibitions in the UK and overseas.

The Society has strong links with IGPOTY and sponsors the Portfolio Category. We spoke to some of the Society members who made the final cut in this year's contest, including Polina Plotnikova ARPS, David Jordan FRPS and Justin Minns LRPS.

For more information on the winners or entering the competition, see [igpoty.com](http://igpoty.com)

## DAVID JORDAN FRPS

Finalist in the Portfolio Category

Creative photography often turns the ordinary into the extraordinary. Botanical subjects can be the source of really inspirational images – being rich in colour, shape, form and texture.

One way to achieve interesting images is to use a textured barrier between the subject and camera. This first came to my notice at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in 2008, when I saw a fern pressing against a mouldy wet window (it inspired my successful FRPS panel).

Greenhouses, textured glass,

polytunnel tents and insulating fleece can all add to creativity.

The materials often generate a soft-focus effect, which is achieved as objects close to the material appear sharp, while more distant ones become significantly blurred – despite using a wide-angle lens at a small aperture (f/8 – f/11).

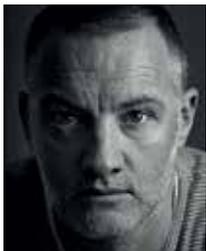
Fairly simple cameras and lenses can be used very creatively, and compact system cameras are especially effective, since their flexible viewing screens make it much easier to work at awkward angles.



**'ONE WAY TO ACHIEVE INTERESTING IMAGES IS TO USE A TEXTURED BARRIER BETWEEN THE SUBJECT AND CAMERA'**







## JUSTIN MINNS LRPS

Commended, *Wildflower Landscapes*  
[justinminns.co.uk](http://justinminns.co.uk)

The soft, delicate nature of flowers attracts me, so these are the qualities that I try to emphasise in my floral images.

Using a combination of a large aperture and a telephoto or macro lens to create a shallow depth of field, it's possible to focus the viewer's attention on the flower while leaving the rest of the image to fade into beautiful blurriness.

Accurate focusing is essential and my Canon 5D MkII's nine AF points don't cut it, so I focus manually, with the image magnified in live view.

My favourite lenses for this sort of photography are the Canon 100mm f/2.8 L macro and Canon 70-200mm f/4L.

The former produces wonderfully smooth blurred areas and allows me to really fill the frame with the subject, while the zoom range of the latter gives me more flexibility and the longer focal length makes for very shallow depth-of-field effects.

**'ACCURACY IS ESSENTIAL SO I  
 FOCUS MANUALLY, WITH THE  
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## GILLIAN HUNT ARPS

Highly Commended and Commended: Photo Projects, Macro Art  
[photographybygillianhunt.com](http://photographybygillianhunt.com)

I've been taking macro images of flowers and grasses, both domestic and wild, for around 10 years, and I am always drawn to macro, no matter what I set out to shoot.

I spend a lot of time observing my chosen subjects and the available natural light throughout the day, and doing short test shoots to see what is

working and what isn't. I grow domestic/cultivated plants in my decking garden and photograph them in situ, whereas I visit wild flowers on a daily basis until I find the best time to do a 'serious' shoot.

I'm lucky that I live in rural Perthshire, an area with a wide variety of wild flowers and grasses.

I always shoot with a Nikon D800 and a choice of three macro lenses: a Nikon 60mm, a Lensbaby, which I use mainly, and a Nikon 105mm.

Photography for me is as necessary as breathing. Wherever I go, I'm constantly wondering if what I am looking at would make a good photograph.