

Macro Photography

Point and Shoot Cameras

&

Digital SLR Cameras



Macro photography opens up a whole new world to a photographer. Macro photography can be achieved with either a point and shoot camera or a Digital SLR (single lens reflex) camera.

While the results achievable with a point and shoot camera in macro mode probably won't compare with a DSLR with a dedicated macro lens I've seen some remarkably good shots with compact cameras. Here are a few tips to help you get the most out of your camera no matter which type you use:

Select Macro Mode – Macro mode is generally symbolized with a little flower and when selected it will tell your camera that you want to focus on a subject closer to your lens than normal (the minimum distance allowed will vary from camera to camera – consult your

instruction manual to find yours). Macro mode will also usually tell your camera to choose a large aperture so that your subject is in focus but the background is not. If you are using a DSLR I like to set mine on Av mode and select f5.6 to get that nice smooth blurred background. (Experiment with this to find out what will look best.)

Use a Tripod – in macro photography a tripod can be particularly useful, even if you're just shooting with a compact camera. Keeping your camera still not only improves your shots by getting rid of camera shake, but it allows you to play around with different settings without losing your composition.



Aperture – once in macro mode some cameras will not allow you to make many other adjustments but if you are able to play with your aperture settings it can be well worthwhile to do so. Aperture impacts the depth of field of your shots. Choose a small aperture (big number) if you want a large depth of field with everything in focus or a large aperture (small number) if you just want your main subject in focus. In macro photography you'll probably want a shallow depth of field so select the largest aperture available.

Focusing –In macro photography it is helpful to have full control over focusing – especially when you have shallow depth of fields where it is all the more important to make sure the right part of your shot is in focus. If your camera allows manual focusing select this option and manually focus on the part of our subject that is the main point of interest. With bugs focus on their eyes. This is where we look when viewing a photo with insects, animals & people.



Composition – remember some of the basic rules of composition like the Rule of Thirds. Make sure your image has a main point of interest and place that focal point in a smart position in your image in order to draw the eye of your viewer. Try to select a non cluttered or simple background for your main subject so as it doesn't compete with it visually. Try shooting your subject at different angles. Don't always shoot looking down. It is more interesting to try for something out of the ordinary.

Flash – in many macro shots having some artificial light is important. The challenge with compact cameras is that most give you limited control of your flash. As a result choosing a good time of day when there is plenty of available light is probably your best bet. If you do need more light check to see if your camera allows you to pull back the level that your flash fires at. Alternatively you might like to try diffusing it in some way (tissue paper or cello tape over the flash for example). Another option might be to use some other source of artificial light or to invest in a reflector to help make the most of available light. Experiment with different methods of lighting your subject.

Take Your Shot - once you have your shot lined up and in focus take your shot. Make sure once you've taken it to take a good look at it on your LCD, zooming in to make sure that your focusing is sharp. Try shooting at slightly different apertures, with different compositions and focusing on different points of your subject to see what works best. If it's windy, be patient and the wind will stop briefly then snap your photo.

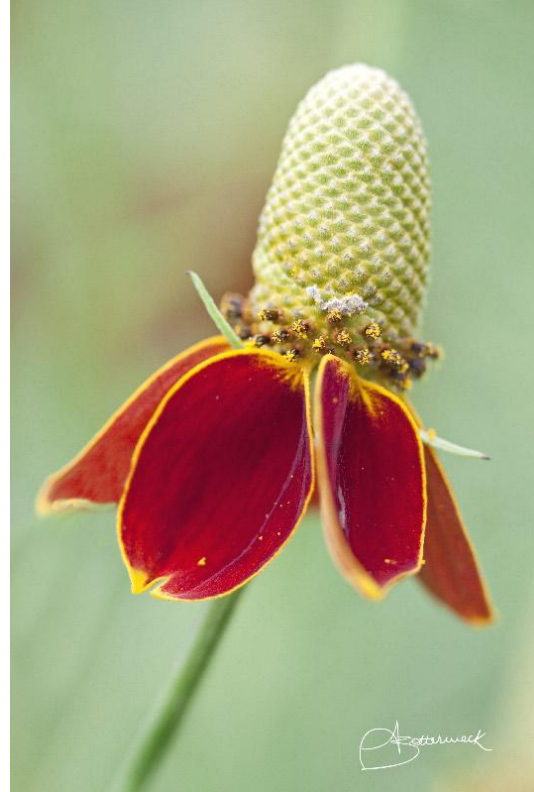
Macro Lens Attachments – some compact cameras actually have accessories available to help with macro/close up photography. Digital SLR's since you can interchange lenses offer several sizes. These will enable you to enlarge your subject and/or decrease your minimum focal length. These might be worth investing in if you intend on doing a lot of macro work.



Self Timer – Most compact cameras don't have cable releases but a simple way around this is to use your camera's self timer on it's shortest time setting which will similarly mean you have no movement of your camera when taking your shot especially if using a tripod or someother type of support like a bean bag, or any steady surface.

The term 'macro photography' is actually when you produce an image where your subject is captured on your image sensor at life size (or bigger) with a 1:1 ratio.

Most compact cameras this is not achieved and in fact 'close up' photography would be a better description. However most manufacturers call their close up mode 'macro mode'.



Remember, that it isn't the camera that makes the photo, it's the person behind the camera.

Happy Shooting,

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