



The profile of this day lily caught Monte Nagler's eye. Notice how use of a dark background helped to heighten the impact of the shot.

Flowers offer photo options

One of the most abundant, beautiful and colorful subjects for your spring and summertime photography is flowers. So plentiful are they that the choices of presenting them photographically are almost endless.


You might, for example, select the close-up shot revealing the innermost heart of the flower, the delicate texture of the stamen, minute drops of moisture, or a single petal that becomes a picture in itself.

Or you might prefer to show the character of a single whole flower, a grouping, or even an entire field of flowers.

The best time to photograph flowers is in the morning when they are freshest. Hot, afternoon sun may cause flowers to look limp and wilted.

Diffused sunlight from either behind or the side is best. It will give your flower intimate texture and full color saturation. Fill-in flash can also add extra sparkle.

TO FILL the viewfinder with a single flower or part of a blossom, you'll need close-up equipment such as close-up filters, extension tubes, or a macro



photography

Monte Nagler

lens. All work well and will give you pleasing results.

Because you'll often need a small aperture to maximize depth-of-field, a tripod and cable release are a must to keep your camera steady during the long shutter speeds required.

As always, watch your backgrounds! A distracting or "busy" background can ruin a picture. So be sure to check yours after composing your shot.

Look over the entire viewfinder and use your camera's depth-of-field preview to check out the background. You'll often want it as a soft non-distracting blur in your picture.

Better still, carry a small piece or

black poster board or cloth in your camera bag and place it behind the flowers. The background will go totally black, resulting in greater impact in your finished shot.


The poster can also act as a wind-breaker to stop swaying flowers on a brisk day.

Try some innovative techniques, too. Shoot a group of flowers, focusing on only one so that the rest become complementary blurs of color. Or move in close and focus on only the stamen, allowing the petals to be out-of-focus blurs.

Also, try sprinkling the flowers with droplets of water to give them a fresh, natural look.

In addition to flowers around your home or in the wild, a local greenhouse will provide excellent picture possibilities, as will the botanical gardens located at Belle Isle and the University of Michigan gardens in Duxbury. The gardens at Cranbrook have flowers as well as scenic woodland areas and outdoor sculpture open to the public for a modest admission price.

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This is another lesson on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for ten years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 16338 Middlebelt, Livonia, 522-8311, 265 N. Main Street, Plymouth, 455-1222. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 23552 Farmington Road, Farmington, MI 48024.

By David Messing
special writer

Partly cloudy today and tonight. Lows in the mid to upper 30s. Heavy rains predicted by tomorrow afternoon, 2-4 inches possible.

The year was 1973, and I was on medical leave. I was lying around the house with an extension cord sticking out of my robe. The extension cord was attached to a heating pad, which was held to my back with elastic bandages. Wherever I was, all I needed to do was plug into the nearest electrical outlet. It was in this setting that an idea hit me: "Since I am off work for three months, why don't I take my aching back and family down to Florida?"

Sandy's grandparents were always writing, wanting us to come down. Some time into the second week of "hot and therapy," I started feeling pretty good. My mother-in-law, June, was with us as she also was visiting her parents.

One day Mom said, "Well, I have to leave Friday." In shock, we all turned and asked in unison "Why?" Her reply was, "They need me to fill in for one of the girls at the store."

"You're gonna end a vacation in Florida to go back and fill in for some girl?" I sat in disbelief. "Man... If I ever get my own business, I hope you'll work for me."

YEARS HAVE passed and my mother-in-law is my business partner. With a partner like Mom, I knew I could help but succeed. A year or Christmas card for Mom and on the cover of the card was a cartoon of me painting a picture on a high, shaky platform.

On the ground level was Mom nailing boards on the base to steady the spindly structure. Her support put me in business and as a youngster, my own mother's support and encouragement helped me stay into art.

Who's supporting the artist in your family? Now "support" doesn't just mean financial. No, the artist you know needs much more support than just the money for art supplies. The artist needs positive statements for continual growth, honest criticism for learning, and someone to promote them with a gentle nudge or maybe a push.

Positive statements encourage growth. Like water to the roots of a budding artist, positive statements nourish creativity and encourage the setting of new goals. Artists were won-

derfully sensitive in a positive environment and grow accordingly.

On the other hand, artists are tragically sensitive in a negative environment and creatively become ill accordingly. I, for example, teach art, do art and write about art.

For me to be creative, I must be free from negative input. It jams my creative processes. Since this is such a high priority, my wife and mother-in-law support me positively and for this I am thankful.

HERE IS an example of negative input: One student seemed extraordinarily upset about her picture and when I asked what was the matter, she said, "My mom said I should complete one picture every lesson."

Talk about being under pressure. One young teen-ager consistently did well in her lessons yet never seemed happy with the outcome. Since I had never met her parents, I ran out to the car with her and her wonderfully rendered picture of a dog.

She held it up to show her mom and I said proudly, "Isn't that something!" Her mother's reply was "I guess, I don't like dogs." The followup on both is that they, of course, dropped out of art altogether.

The visual image in a piece of art is an expression of the artist and it is waiting for a reply. To a new artist, the wait may seem endless as a viewer looks at their artwork. The comment by the viewer is either a stone in the artist's foundation or a bruise on a tender ego.

Honest criticism for learning. The word criticism means, "To judge the merits and faults of." Every artist needs criticism to be sure their work is accurate in its technical merits and understood in its expression. My own feelings about my individual piece

es of art rise and fall with the criticism of my non-artist wife, Sandy.

So I therefore feel that every artist needs someone to tell them "it's good" when it's good and "it's bad" when it's bad. If it is "good," then the artist should be happy. If it is "bad," then the artist should find out why.

ARTISTS NEED a gentle nudge or a push... Some even need a hit in the head. Artists tend to settle into their work and need another person to push them, promote them and get them doing artwork they would perhaps never choose to do.


Like an agent, some mother's or father's line up art jobs for their young artist. Regardless of how much the artist gripes, the "work" is good. The pay may be little and the job may be a drag but the "work" is good.

The artist may insist, "There's no way I can do it," but their promoter, Mom, Dad or whoever, knows they can and supports them positively. And that which couldn't be done gets done, with positive statements, honest criticism and oh yes, a bit of a nudge. That's the way at least it was with me... thanks, Mom.

We have opened the store in Plymouth, so you can all stop out and take a look. It's in the Charleston Square on Main Street, right by the railroad tracks.

We will have classes out there too. We are taking names if you are interested. The classes are filling up fast. If they are full, you can put your name on a waiting list and the next available spot you'll be called.

The number in Plymouth is 455-1222 and the number in Livonia is 522-6311. Our summer schedule will be available next week if you are interested in summer classes.




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