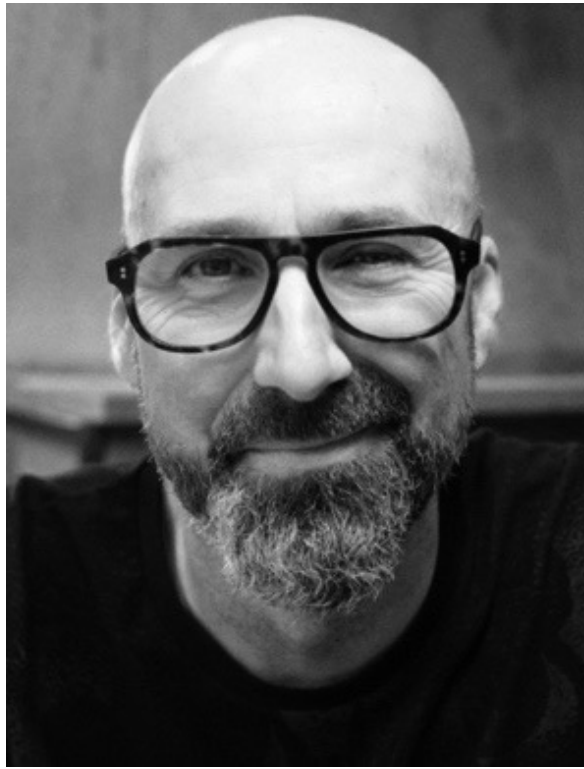


Guide to

Plant Photography

Affordable tips for
plant photography





I'm Simon Ellingworth, I'm an international award-winning photographer and educator, writing this guide in collaboration with Polina Plotnikova an award-winning plant photographer.

Polina describes her approach to flower photography as "similar to that of a portrait photographer - for every flower and plant that I photograph, I always try to find its unique look, study its mood and character, and ultimately unlock the hidden beauty".

Welcome to our RPS quick guide to affordable plant photography. Polina and I are two of the many experienced tutors that support RPS members in their passion for photography.

This guide offers you some quick and easy tips for taking Plant Photography and getting great results. Find out how you can elevate your photography with household items.

If you enjoy this guide, take a look at some of the courses and workshops, I highlight at the end. These are all offered by the RPS to support your photographic journey. I'd also recommend becoming a member, there is a strong photographic community in the RPS, spanning all levels of experience. You'll meet like-minded photographers who are also exploring the art.

Good luck with your adventures in plant photography.

Simon Ellingworth



We're committed to photography for everyone.

Our commitment as an educational charity is to bring photography to everyone. As a member you'll be supporting an organisation that provides a platform for photographers of all levels, while following in the footsteps of 1000s of photographers.

The Royal Photographic Society is the earliest established international photographic society, and as the interests and needs of our members have evolved, so too has The RPS. However, our original aims of promoting the art and science of photography are as relevant today as they were back when we first formed.

We've been inspiring and supporting RPS members on their photographic journey for over 170 years. Let us do the same for you.

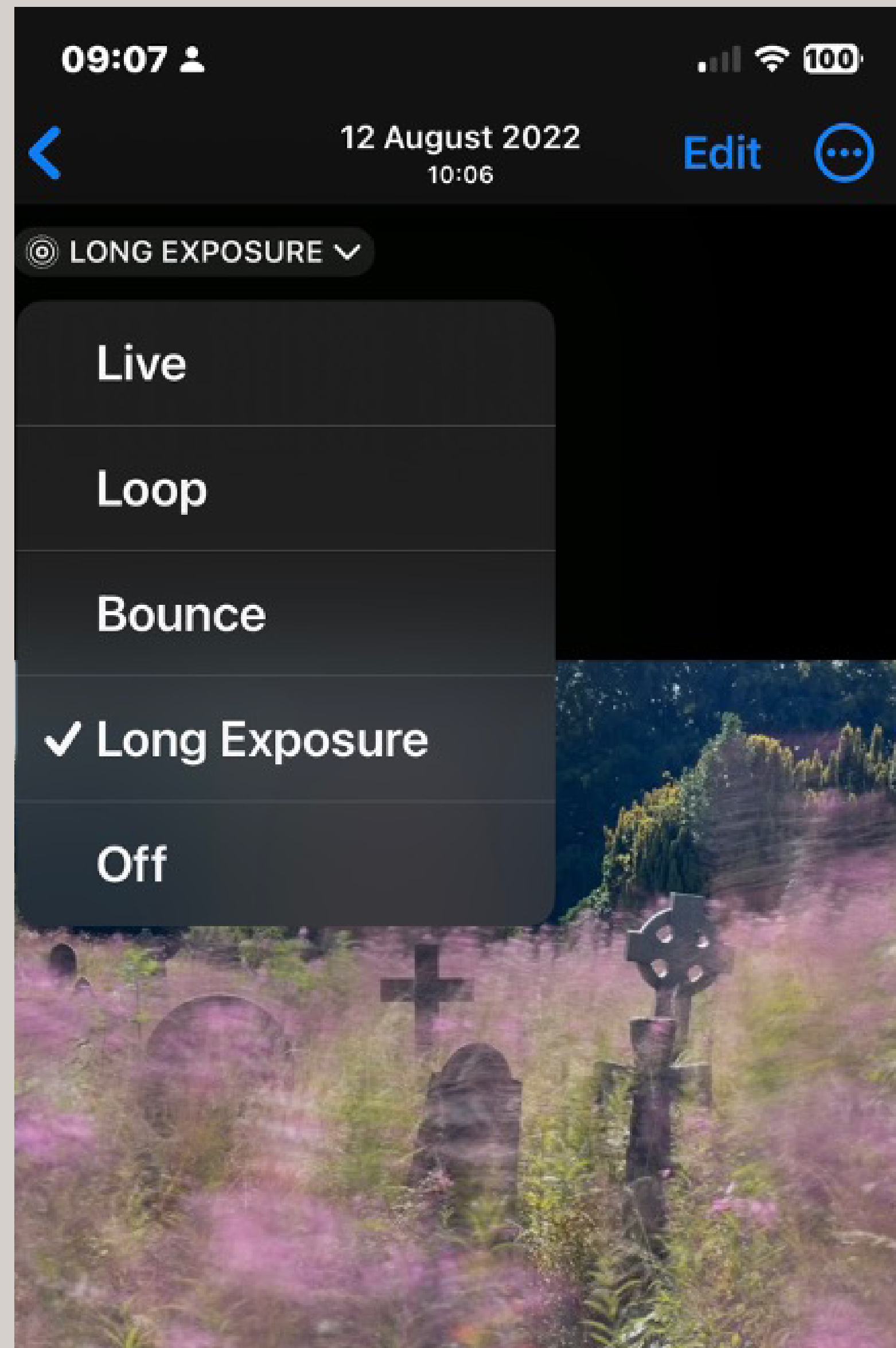
Join the Royal Photographic Society as a member at **rps.org/plant**

Photography doesn't need to be expensive

Plant and flower photography is both a brilliant beginner's genre and one that provides many photographers a lifetime of pleasure. The great news is that it doesn't need to be expensive and it's incredibly accessible no matter where you live, because if you reframe how you think about plants, then even a modest weed can become the star of the show.

I truly believe that the least important factor here is the gear you own. Sure, with a modern DSLR or Mirrorless camera you will have more technical options over phone photographers, but with recent development in phones that gap is constantly closing.

The real value here is to realise that it's the ideas, your own thinking and creativity, and a general curiosity that drives this sort of photography. So let me share some simple but effective ways to make great leaps and bounds in your photography without spending a penny or travelling far...



Suggestion:

Here's a plant based long exposure using the stock iPhone camera shot in 'live mode' and selecting 'long exposure' from the drop down in the native ios photos app:

Here are our top tips

1. Create a hero

When you find an interesting plant, the first thing to ask yourself is what you love about it. Find a single element, get in close and make this the hero of your shot. Lean into the adage that less is more. Experiment with lots of different angles, instead of an entire plant you are looking for one interesting element.



Suggestion:

Make your own Macro Lens: Just grab a magnifying glass or Jewellers Loupe and hold it in front of your phone's camera lens. If you want to secure it you could use mounting putty.

2. Raid the recycling for free photo gear

A. Your household recycling is a treasure trove of creative photographic materials - you just need to lean into curiosity.

Recycled packaging materials such as tissue paper and other translucent materials are brilliant as the light can pass through them making them almost unique every time. Why not try crinkling some for an interesting texture?

3. Print your own background

When there isn't a clean or interesting background available, why not pull one out of your camera bag! That's right, loads of photographers print out backgrounds that are out of focus, or textured. So why not shoot your own backgrounds and print them at home.

The key here is to try varying the distance between the background and the hero subject, so the backgrounds are either in focus or better still out of focus. This is great fun and will yield some unique results.

Equally you can use other non-hero plants close to the lens for a colour blur.



Suggestion:

Play around with harmonious and contrasting colours for an eye-catching photo, whether that's seasonal soft pinks and purples, vibrant reds, warm oranges or lush greens.

4. Create dimension with a spray bottle

Find a disused spray bottle and you've got another amazing free creative tool!

Start with the idea of spraying the plant to add beads of water to catch the light. This can add a whole different dimension to a plant or flowers surface.

It's best to do this on a clear day when the sun is shining to add contrast to the image. Or add the look of rainfall by continuing to mist water over the plant as the photo is being taken.



💡 Suggestion:

Now, back to that spray bottle, with a strong backlight, try spraying behind your subject to create amazing bokeh. You might need to vary the distance and if you use a camera, vary the aperture.

5. Exploit the light

Light conditions can make or break a photo, so try to plan your shoot to coincide with interesting weather, morning, or evening light. Your job is to exploit the light - why not shoot 'contra jour' which means directly into the light, this will add light flares or other effects which you should wholeheartedly embrace.

6. Get on down

So, your job as a photographer is to show your viewers the world in a way that they have not seen it before. It's time to get down and dirty, change your perspective by laying on the garden or forest floor. Explore the world from a low perspective which will elevate smaller plants in the frame, and you might also discover plants that you've never even noticed before.



Next Steps:

The RPS is dedicated to bringing you world-class photography education in a variety of forms to suit your personal needs and lifestyle.

In this guide you've discovered some simple affordable ideas to elevate your plant and flower photography. Don't let your journey end there, at the RPS we have a range of workshops to further develop your skills and creativity.

We have a series of three brilliant on-demand video workshops that could be the next step on your photographic journey:

- **"Introduction to Flower Portraiture"**
- **"Creative Flower Photography"**
- **"More Creative Flower Photography"**

(Follow these links or visit rps.org/workshops for more)

These RPS workshops are hosted by me, Simon Ellingworth, and Polina Plotnikova FRPS my co-collaborator of this guide and multi-award-winning flower photographer. Polina blew my mind with some brilliant tips and techniques, simple things you could do at home with inexpensive equipment.

So, if you're feeling inspired after reading this guide, get out there, get curious and don't forget to raid your recycling!





About the RPS

Everything you need for your photographic journey

Whether you simply enjoy taking photos and want to learn more, or you're a professional looking to raise your profile, this membership has everything you need.

Get photographic inspiration, community, recognition and knowledge with RPS membership.

Become a member at rps.org/plant

Expand your skills and knowledge.

With over 200 learning experiences to learn every year, our members trust us to develop their skills and knowledge.

Find inspiration and stay inspired.

Through our journals, awards, exhibitions, newsletters, community, and more, we've been inspiring photographers for over 170 years.

Be part of a thriving community.

Almost 600 members volunteer to connect with member communities, driving discussion, sharing experiences, and supporting learning.

Get recognition as a photographer.

We recognise 1000s of photographers every year through distinctions, competitions, exhibitions, awards and financial support in the form of bursaries.