

Taming Wildflowers

by Robert Berdan

Taking artistic photos of wildflowers can be challenging. Mastering specific photography techniques, having the correct equipment, and knowing when and where to find them all contribute to capturing beautiful shots.

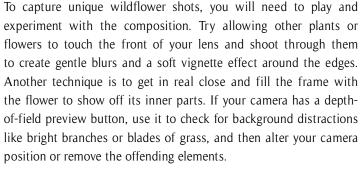


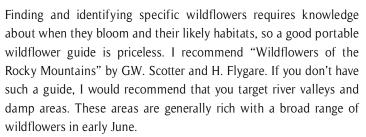




increasing overall colour saturation.







Overcast cloudy days provide the ideal lighting conditions for

photographing wildflowers – sunny days can over-expose highlights

and create too much contrast. If you are hand-holding your camera,

a flash can be helpful, but natural light is generally the best. My

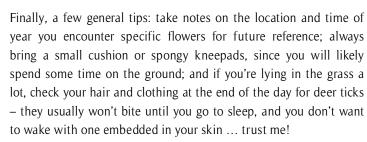
favourite time to shoot is right after a rainfall, when the plants are

covered in water droplets and everything looks and smells fresh. If

there is no apparent natural dew, you can add some with a small

spray of water from a perfume bottle. A polarizing filter is a useful

tool for reducing the shine and reflections off the leaves, while



Although the Canadian Rockies are home to more then 900 wildflower species, the average visitor sees only a few. Many emerge at specific times and only last a few days or weeks. The Prairie Crocus first appears in the Bragg Creek area as early as March, and along with certain other hardy alpine plants, survives in the snow by generating heat through an exothermic chemical reaction that melts the snow. The Glacier Lily is another common flower that emerges early and follows the retreat of the snowline. As the ground warms up, a succession of different plants flower throughout the spring and summer, especially at different altitudes. In the mountains, some plants don't even begin to flower until late July or August.

Wildflowers are good photography subjects because, unlike wildlife, once you find them, they don't run away. In fact, the biggest challenge is finding them and keeping them still in the wind. Most new digital compact cameras offer a macro mode that allows you to move in very close. The trick is to focus carefully and keep the camera still, so using the manual focus and viewing a live preview on the LCD can be very helpful. A good tripod is a necessary accessory, especially up close, where the depth-of-field is shallow and accurate focusing is harder. The best tripods have legs that go flat to the ground when getting closer to the subject. If your camera has interchangeable lenses, you may also want to invest in some additional accessories such as close-up filters, extension tubes, teleconverters or macro lenses.



Robert Berdan is a professional nature photographer located in Calgary, AB and offers regular photography workshops, including a Spring Wildflower workshop in June.

He may be contacted at **(403) 247-2457**, by email at **rberdan@scienceandart.org**, or visited on his website at **www.naturephotographers.com/workshops.html**.

Flowers from left: Roundleaf Orchid; Prairie crocus in snow; Wood Lily; Oxeye Daisys; Common Harebell; the aptly named Elephanthead Lousewort.

At left: Robert zooms in on a cluster of prairie crocuss flowers.