

City Garden Photography Competition 2021



Brought to you by the Sustainability Team

How to enter

Please send us your finest photographs, on the theme of ‘The Beauty of Spring’.

The photos can be taken in any garden or outdoor space. We also welcome images of indoor plants and growing spaces if they fit the theme. We encourage you to think outside the box. Your pictures can include humans as well as plants, tools or animals, but please make sure your humans are happy to be in the photos before sharing them with us :)

Post your photos on Instagram, and tag us @cityunilondonstudentcentre

or email us at campus.news@city.ac.uk

Deadline for submission: 5pm on Wednesday 7th April

How to enter

Photos will be shortlisted by Gabby, our Community Gardener.

The finalists will be announced at midday on Monday 12th April via Instagram @cityunilondonstudentcentre, with a public to vote to select the **winner**.

The winner will be revealed on 16th April, and will receive a Fairtrade chocolate goody bag!

We look forward to seeing your entries :)

Need some extra help? Here is a quick crash-course in garden photography to help you on your way.

Composition

When taking your photos, composition is very important. What are you photographing, and where should it sit in the frame? In the photo opposite, is the hut the subject of the photo, or is it more about the horizon line?

If you choose to take a photo of your favourite houseplant, how much of the room around you do you want to capture in order to contextualise it? Does the plant need to be in the centre of the image?

The [Rule of Thirds](#) is one way of composing an image for interesting effect, but there are many other composition techniques.

The composition can also be changed slightly after the photo has been taken, by cropping the photo.



Cropping

Cropping is something you can do easily on some phones or at a computer. Sometimes it's the difference between a very average photo and a good one.

It also allows you to play with aspect ratios - square format photos are great for close-up photos, and capturing textures with an abstract or graphic feel.

Some camera phones allow you to take panoramic photos, which can work really well for landscape shots.



This image works much better as a square frame, and the crop hides some of the tattier foliage and light glare that otherwise ruin the rhythm.

Colour vs Black & White

You might be surprised to know that many garden photographers shoot in black and white. Whilst what we love about our plants and green spaces is their vibrant colours, sometimes black and white images give a better impression of the ambiance of a space, or the graphic forms of certain plants. Of course it's somewhat subjective, but it's an easy thing to experiment with.



Point of view

If you are struggling to come up with an interesting composition, consider changing your POV or 'point of view'. You will be familiar the idea of a bird's eye view, but consider the other 'beings' in your garden. What would a snail's eye view look like?

This image, taken at the Garden Museum is shot from a couple of inches above the ground. These delicate geraniums appear supersize, as does the small single-story building behind.

By playing with point of view, fairly mundane or humble subject matter can suddenly be seen in a new light, which as a photographer is a great skill to master



Depth of Field

Similar to POV (point of view) depth of field is a simple way of adding interest or drama to otherwise humble subject matter.

When thinking about your shot, identify the foreground, middleground and background. SLR cameras and camera phones allow you to choose where you want the focus to be. In essence, what will be crisp and what will be fuzzy?



Making a story

Images can say a lot, or a little. This is one of my favorite photographs of my garden - ruined lawn, tatty chair, weedy paving, overgrown borders. The kind of garden a gardener really should not have. There's nothing technically good about the photo whatsoever, but I see my gorgeous dog in an uncharacteristic moment of calmness, surveying his 'work'. It's a very personal photo specific to my life as a gardener, my battles with perfectionism and my new life as a dog parent.

The joy of garden photography is that it often pulls in individuals from different artistic disciplines, from fashion photographers and photo journalists to natural historians, gardeners and amateur bird-watchers.



Adding a caption



Images don't need to be personal to be successful. Sometimes a commercially successful garden photograph is one which says very little.

In my former job, I worked at a commercial photography library. We were always on the look-out for very simple images that clients could use to illustrate articles or market products. The more simple an image was, the more versatile it was.

Images like this one could be used to illustrate a variety of topics: allotments, wildlife, summer, annuals, meadows, grow-your-own. We would probably have called it something like 'Phacelia in May', but clients would have captioned it in a diversity of ways

You can choose how you wish to caption your photos. It's your opportunity to communicate with your audience and tell them what you'd like them to see.

Links

Here are some links to other garden photography competition winners to inspire you:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/Promotions/rhs-photo-competition/Results/2020>

<https://igpoty.com/igpoty-competition-12-winners/>

<https://www.gardensillustrated.com/news/winners-international-garden-photographer-2020/>