



Buzzing about wildflowers

Mobile photography activity pack



London and South East
England
WE DISCOVER, WE GROW
Girlguiding

Funded by





Aim

This activity pack aims to provide some basic photography tips that anyone can use to improve their photos.

Every technique has been chosen because they are composition and framing techniques that don't require expensive cameras or equipment to use - in fact they've been chosen because they can all be tried using mobile phones! This is because we want as many people as possible to download the pack and give it a go, regardless of what equipment you have.

Whether you try them on your own, with friends or with your units, our aim is to inspire you to try out some of these photography techniques, get creative and take awesome photos that you can really be proud of.



How did this come about?

This activity pack is possible thanks to funding received from Grow Wild. Grow Wild gives funding to projects that celebrate UK native wildflowers and fungi in exciting and engaging ways.

The Hive was successful in securing funding for a project and used the money to put on a mobile photography and editing workshop at Kew Gardens in London. Those who attended on the day used what they learned to take a variety of amazing photos in the historic gardens, some of which are on the cover of this pack. The full album can be found on our [Facebook page](#).

We've taken what we learned on the day and put it into this activity pack to inspire more people to take better pictures and find out why UK wildflowers and fungi are so important.



To find out more about Grow Wild and to apply for funding for your own projects, head to www.growwilduk.com



Why are UK wildflowers so important?



Wildflowers provide lots of things that insects need: food in the form of leaves, nectar and pollen, also shelter and places to breed. In return, insects pollinate the wildflowers, enabling them to develop seeds and spread to grow in other places.



Many of our favourite fruits, vegetables and nuts rely on insect pollination. For example, in the UK strawberries, raspberries, cherries and apples need to be pollinated by insects to get a good crop. We need wildflowers to provide pollinators (bees and other insects that pollinate plants) with local food sources across the seasons - including times when crops aren't producing flowers.



Wildflowers also contribute to scientific and medical research. Some UK native wildflowers contain compounds which can be used in drugs to treat diseases. For example, foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*) contain chemicals used to treat heart conditions. If we were to lose wildflower species, we could lose potential new medicines.



To find out more about the importance of UK Wildflowers and what we can do to protect them, as well as find out about the youth grant that made this pack possible, visit www.growwilduk.com.

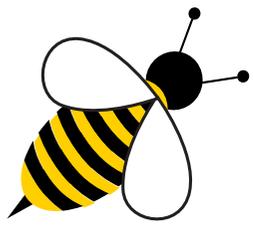
Are those toys?

They are! Toy Photography is a style of photography where photographers use toys or figures in their photos. By using these figures they can manipulate perspective (making simple flowers look like alien worlds for example) and it's a unique way to tell a story or evoke an emotion.

If you're inspired to find out more or try your own hand at toy photography, you can find toy photography related blogs [here](#), or search for [#toyphotography](#) on instagram. It's more popular than you might think! Some toy photographers create highly detailed dioramas or incorporate air, water and fire effects into their shots. The effort that some toy photographers put into a single shot is amazing, so it's well worth checking out.



The toy photography shots in this pack are taken by Izzy, who led the workshop at Kew Gardens. She's been taking amateur photos of toys for about a year and used what she's learned on that journey to contribute the tips and techniques in this pack. She can be found on instagram [@adventure.droid](#)



Little Tips



Take your time

Don't rush to get your picture. If it's a popular spot try not to keep people waiting too long, but don't be afraid to take an extra minute and try some different angles. If you've got the space to yourself, take some time to experiment! Sometimes it's hard to check what a picture is looking like in the moment; it could be super sunny, really busy, you could be short on time. In these scenarios, line up your shot, move around, keep taking pictures and look later. The more pictures you take, the greater the chance of having one that captures the moment in just the way you want it to.

Mix it up!

If you see something you want to take a photo of, do you tend to use the same angle as other people? Many well known locations have a traditional 'shot'. It takes in the whole landmark and is great for leaflets and official shots, but when it comes to personal photos it can be more fun to inject some of your own personality into your photography.

By mixing up how we approach taking a photo, we can create something unique to what everyone else does. The techniques covered in this activity pack will help you do this!

Keep your composition simple

Sometimes, simple is best. A single flower or a leaf can have much more of an impact than trying to capture the whole tree or plant. Emphasise what is important. To place maximum attention on your subject you will want to eliminate unwanted clutter. This might include dead leaves, pine needles, bits of rubbish, stray grass...these seemingly little things will distract from your composition. Always remember to be respectful of the subject/area if it's not yours! Take care not to cause any damage.



Be a bug, be a bird and do a loop...



Angles are everything. If you only take a photo from straight on or from just one angle, you could be missing out on interesting features or a better all round photo. Explore the subject as much as possible to maximise your chance at getting an interesting and more unique photo to the ones everyone else is taking.

To make sure you explore every angle, do these three simple things;

Be a bug - Get down on the ground and look up at the subject. It might look totally different!

Be a bird - Stand over the subject. Top down views offer something a little different to the normal perspective.

Do a loop - As much as you can, walk around the subject. You might find a nicer angle or something more interesting in the background. This can also help cut out things you don't want in your picture (people in the background for example).



In this photo the angle is straight on, but it doesn't capture the scene at its best.

But this photo has been taken from the side, capturing a more interesting scene.



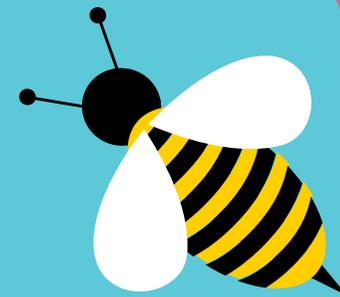


Give it a go!

Choose a subject - something to take a picture of. Things in nature work really well for practicing this, so why not head to your local park, into the forrest or to the beach?

Take photos of your subject while being a bug (from underneath) being a bird (from above) and do a loop to find the best angle.

Take a look at the different angles of your photos. Which one do you prefer? Did you find something surprising when you looked at the subject in a different way?





Focus

Focus refers to the elements of a scene that will be the sharpest.

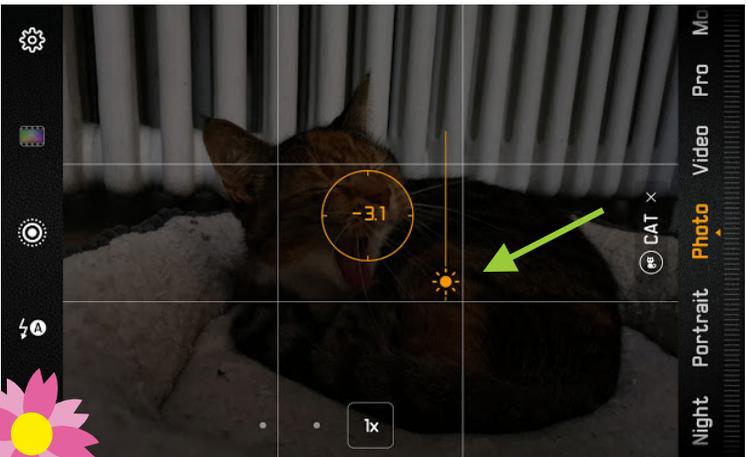
By manipulating the focus in our pictures we can create stunning shots! Essentially, focus means adjusting an optical device to produce a clear image. This optical device can be anything from a camera, to your eyes. We don't usually notice our eyes changing focus as we readjust our visual focus subconsciously, but we can see the same effect when we do it manually on things like cameras.

If you have a nice distance in between the subject in the foreground (close to the camera) and what's in the background (further away) you can manipulate what your camera focuses on, leading to a variety of possibilities. In this pair of photos, the focus has been manipulated so that the top picture has a foreground focus and the bottom picture has a background focus.



Exposure

Tapping to affect the focus also affects your exposure (how much light your camera lets into the photo) so you might need to tap on the object you want to focus on and then manipulate the exposure to make sure the picture looks how you want it to. The exposure should appear as a slider which you can slide up and down.



Have a go!

Find something around you and use it as a subject. It could be an ornament, plant, toy or anything.

Open up your phone camera and have a go at making sure the subject is in focus.

Once you've nailed that, set up something behind the foreground subject and make sure both things are visible in your viewfinder. Have a go at switching the focus between the foreground and background subject.

Out of the two photos, which one do you prefer? Foreground and background focus will lead to different results in every scenario, so try out different scenes!

The Rule of Thirds



Power Points

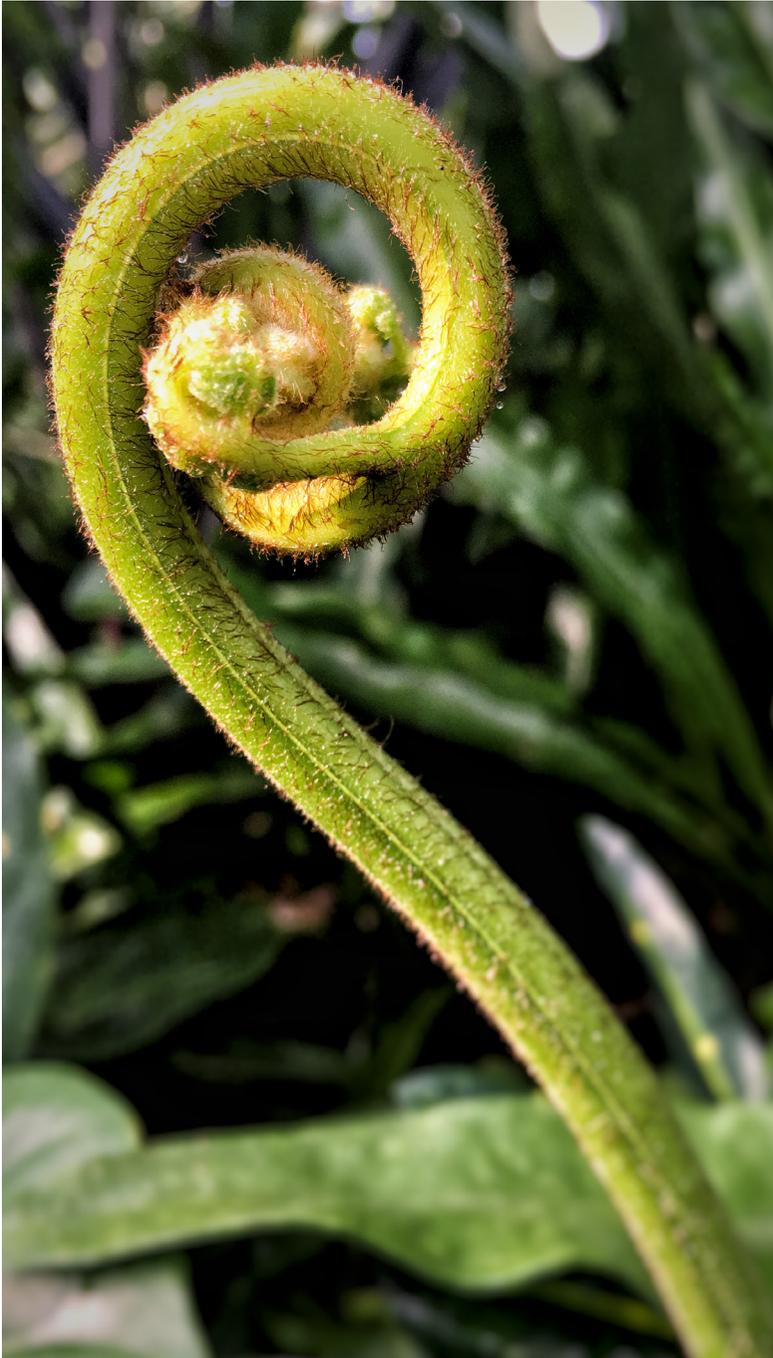
The rule of thirds is simply a guideline to help you take pictures with maximum visual appeal. If you view each frame as if it is divided into nine sections, composing a photo - for example making sure it's straight, getting your subject directly in the centre (like the top photo) or applying a creative angle - is easier.

There is a top, middle and bottom third as well as a left, middle and right third to each photo. The points where these lines intersect are referred to as “power points”.

Aligning your subject with one of the power points, like in the bottom photo, will help create a great shot! If you're taking a landscape shot, try aligning the horizon with the top or bottom line.

You won't want to use these rules every time, but they're a nice starting point for maximising the visual appeal of your photos.





This photo was taken by a Girlguiding LaSER member at our Kew Gardens workshop and perfectly captures the Fibonacci Sequence in nature.

Isn't that the golden ratio?

The Golden Ratio is based on the Fibonacci sequence, which was developed by a mathematician in the 12th century. Put simply, it is a ratio of ideal proportions: 1 to 1.618. The Golden Ratio goes by a handful of other names, including the golden mean, divine proportion, golden rectangle, extreme mean and **phi**.

It is used across a variety of disciplines such as design, architecture, painting and music, and can also be found in nature. When drawn, the Fibonacci sequence is depicted as a spiral within the shape of a perfect rectangle. This number and 'perfect rectangular shape' are important because they form the most pleasing and attractive shape for the human eye. The **standard grid - 'rule of thirds' - is just a simpler version of the Phi grid.**

Open up your camera, head to settings and set your grid to on. Some phones have the option to put a 'phi' or 'standard' grid on the camera.

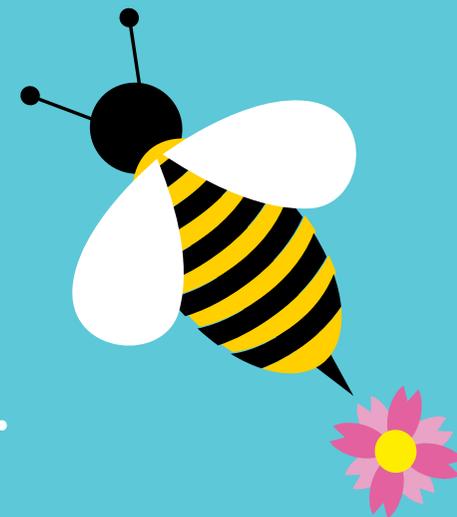
Doing this will mean a grid overlay is displayed on your screen whenever you open your camera. It might seem distracting at first, but it will help you take more visually pleasing photos!

Once you have your grid on, try taking pictures of a landscape and lining up the horizon with the top or bottom third line.

After you've done this, pick a subject and align the main focus with one or more of the power points.

Next, take a picture with your subject lined up directly in the centre column. The more you experiment, the better you'll get.

Give it
a go!



Macro



This simply means taking photos of small things close up and is great for capturing small details or textures.

Check your phones, you might already have a macro setting! This will help if you're shooting something small and close up.

When using your mobile, zoom with your feet, never your camera. If you 'pinch zoom' it's a digital zoom, not a true zoom, so you're essentially cropping in your camera. This throws away pixels, negatively affecting the quality of your shots.

Most of the background will be blurred out - this is fine, even if it blurs things you consider important, as it adds more emphasis on the main subject.



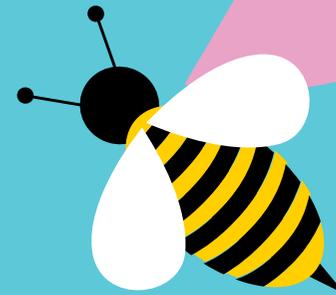
Look for a small object to focus on. This could be a small toy, a leaf, a petal or even a texture such as wood, brick, your pets foot or fabric.

Using your camera, get as close as you can to the subject with it still being in focus. If you have one, using a tripod or balancing your phone on something such as a wall or table can help stabilise your phone. This will make it easier to maintain focus on the subject. If you have a 'flip book' style phone case, turn it into an 'A frame' to support your phone. Popsockets and ring holders are perfect for balancing, and placing objects in front of and behind your phone can also help maintain its balance.

As long as your phone can maintain its focus, keep moving closer to the subject. If your phone can no longer maintain focus, you're too close. Move backwards until it can focus again.

Try using macro on different objects and textures to see what works well and experiment with capturing the smaller details!

**Give it
a go!**



Leading lines

A leading line is a strong line within the photograph that leads the viewer's eye to the subject.

You could use windowsills, tree branches, pathways and more as leading lines. When you are shooting photos outdoors there are many other interesting options from blades of grass to fences, walls, trees or water lines.

Leading lines don't have to just draw your viewer to the subject. They can be used to illustrate a story.

In the top picture there's an illusion created of a road to be travelled or a long journey.

In the bottom picture, our eyes naturally follow the lines of the branches, bringing us into the subjects in the middle.





Foreground

focus



As you're setting up your next photo, examine the foreground. Does it help to tell your story?

The foreground can add context, perspective and interest to your photos.

Foreground interest can be found in a variety of ways; think texture (macro), a reflection or leading lines. In the first photo, the amount of ice and the subjects reflection helps portray the sense of being lost or alone.

Though we're calling it foreground focus, it doesn't have to be *in focus*. By having blurred blades of grass in the second picture, it makes it look more like a candid shot, like we're hidden in the grass.

In both cases, the foreground focus brings us into the scene and helps create a story.



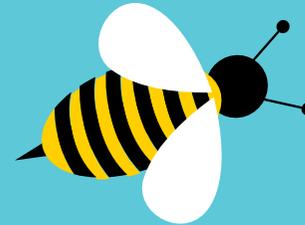
Leading lines and foreground focus can really help your photos tell a story or evoke a feeling.

When you're out taking photos, look for something you can use as a leading line. If you're in a natural setting, look for tree branches or plant stems. If you're in an urban area look for walls, fences, or posts. See if you can incorporate them into your photo to draw the viewer's eye.

Once you've experimented with leading lines, have a go at foreground focus.

Look for textures that could help tell a story or make your photo interesting. Whether you have a main subject or you're taking more of a landscape picture, your foreground focus can give your photos a different edge.

Give it
a go!



Negative

space

Negative space is the area that surrounds the subject. The positive space (subject) takes up only a small section of the picture, but it has the effect of drawing the viewers attention to it even more. Anything can be a negative space, as long as it takes up the majority of the photo. It could be sky, grass, wall, or anything else that is a consistent texture - this picture is the middle of a wooden tractor wheel at a play park! The key is to find something that is visually interesting, but at the same time 'mundane' enough that the real focus is on the subject.



Have a go!

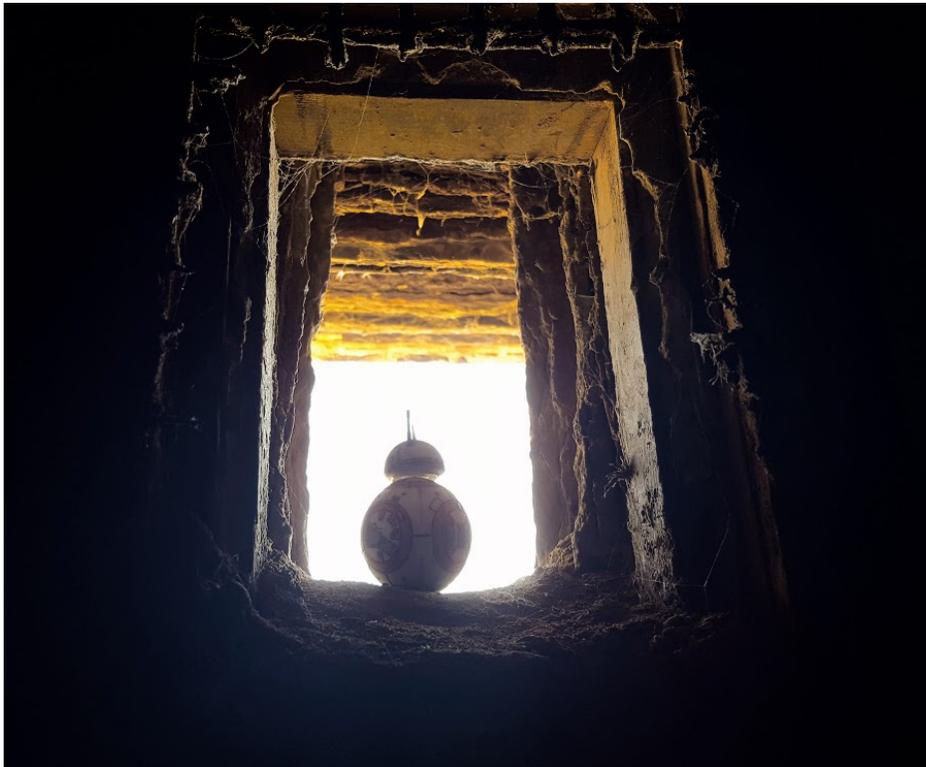
Choose something as a subject and see if you can incorporate negative space. This could be a plant with lots of sky behind it (remember, be a bug!) or something put against a wall, bush, or pinned up piece of fabric. Get creative and move things around if you need to!





Frame within a frame

Use a shape within the frame to 'hold' the subject even more. This affect can be achieved with railings, architecture, plant stems, or anything you can think of! You could get a friend to frame an object by making a heart shape with their hands and positioning it in the middle, for example.



When you're taking photos, look for something that could 'frame' your main subject. This could be a window, a picture or painting on a wall, someone walking through a doorway, or if you want to get really creative you could take apart a picture frame or position sticks and twigs to frame an object.



Fill the frame

Rather than trying to fit things into the frame, let the subject - in this case leaves on a palm or parts of a flower - spill out of the edges of the frame. You could capture half of a sunflower, part of a fern or more. This is another technique when getting up close is crucial. Both of these pictures were taken by Girlguiding LaSER members who attended our Kew Gardens workshop!



Time to

explore!



This pack has some basic composition techniques you can use for your photos. A little foreground interest, a few dynamic leading lines and you've created an image that draws your viewer into your world at a pace which you control. Using what we've covered in this workshop, head out and get creative!

While exploring, try to capture your subjects in a unique way. Frame and focus your shots and try out a few of the visual styles to see which one you like best.

Above everything, remember:



Be a bug, a bird and do a loop. Look at the subject from every angle.



Zoom with your feet, never your camera.



Take your time! Take time to review your shots before moving on to another subject, and remember it's better to take 100 photos just for that one perfect shot than take 10 and wish you'd spent more time on that one shot.





Taken a photo



you're proud of?

Have you used this pack to take a photo you're really happy with? We'd love to see it! Is there a tip or technique which you've found yourself using more and more? We'd love to know! Share your pictures and comments with us via:

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