



# How to Take Better Photographs of Your Work

BY KATIE ELZER-PETERS

**T**aking great pictures is a professional skill, one that not all of us have learned. However, for garden designers, good pictures are essential to promoting your practice and getting new work. “But I don’t have a great camera,” you say. I’m going to stop you right there. If you have an iPhone, you most certainly have a great camera. Most phone cameras are equal, if not superior, to any point-and-shoots on the market. Even if you had a “good camera,” if you don’t know how to use it, the extra money you spent is useless any-

way. Yes, there is value in equipment, but to keep a current portfolio, the best camera is the one you carry, and that is probably the one on your phone.

Now that that is settled, it’s time to get down to the real work of photography, and that is in the way you *use* the equipment. (Just because someone has colored pencils doesn’t mean they can draw up a great landscape plan, hmm?) For advice on getting great photographs of gardens and landscapes, I interviewed **MARK TURNER**, an award-winning landscape, garden, and portrait photographer in the Pacific Northwest. Here are his tips for taking a comprehensive set of photographs that will show off every facet of your carefully constructed landscape design.

## 1 CAPTURE RELATIONSHIPS

“You want your photographs to invite a sense of discovery, just as if you’re walking through the garden,” Mark says, adding that it’s important to show the relationships of elements within the garden, and how the pieces fit together. “In a well-designed garden it will be easy for you to show the foreground, middle ground, and background elements of the design. In a poorly designed ➡

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garden, this type of shot will be no more than a pit.

“See if you can create a vignette that represents the design elements,” Mark suggests. In addition to overviews and vignettes, he recommends photographs that show how elements relate to each other, like a path to a border.

## 2 REMEMBER THE DETAILS

Overviews can be spectacular but a great design doesn't skimp on the details—and neither should your photographs. Take individual plant portraits, which will come in handy when presenting future mood boards to clients. “I think it is fun to include detail shots, as well,” Mark says. “I look to show how a structure is put together, the paving details, or close-up details of a plant.”

## 3 SHOOT MORNING, NOON, AND NIGHT

Mark advises to pay attention to the time of day. “Some people like to shoot before dawn, while others like to be out after night. Most of us avoid midday sun.” The exception to that, he says, is when you're shooting a desert garden. “When working midday in the desert, you have all of this spiky, prickly stuff that works well in full sun.” Including the sky in the shot will help tell the story that it's a sunny day. “It all depends on the kind of mood you're trying to create.”

If there's lighting installed in the garden, Mark says the best time to photograph it is 20 minutes after the official sunset time. At that time you still have enough



light in the sky that you can see the rest of the landscape, while still capturing the landscape lighting.

## 4 VARY THE ANGLES

Have you ever looked at your design from an angle other than standing? It's an easy way to add variety to your shots.

“I'm 5'6” but I don't want to show everything from 5 feet off ground,” says Mark. “I will get up on a ladder and lie down on the ground to vary the shots.” He says, “Those are always the photos I get comments on. People say, ‘I never knew my garden looked like that!’”

Take a few pictures every time you're on site and you'll never be without new additions to your portfolio. Just remember to hide the hose first! 🐾