

Garden Photography Photography Essentials

(Tips for photographing
a garden or anything else)

Presented by Debbie Laverell





Agenda

Photography Basics

Planning and Preparation

Tips for Photographing a Garden

Composition

The Supporting Actors - Garden Elements

Lighting and Weather Conditions

Equipment

Review

Photography Basics

Creating stunning photographs require a lot of skill, patience and time to study the scene, compose, technical details and then 'make' the photograph.

A photographer needs to focus on various elements of the scene and put them together to make a meaningful photograph.

The ingredients of a good photograph:

- The subject and setting
- Technical execution
- Creative interpretation

Five common elements that great images typically have:

- Good use of light
- Color
- A captivating moment – image tells a story
- Correct composition for the given situation – clear focal point
- The distance to the subject.

Light

Light is the most fundamental element that all photographs need because it illuminates the scene or subject.

Whether it be natural or artificial light the quality and direction of light is what's important.

Light helps to create a particular mood within the photograph and can bring emphasis to key elements within a frame. Likewise, light can help create depth and accentuate the textures in an image by creating a mix of highlights and shadows.

Light is probably the most important tool we have to create better quality and beautiful images.



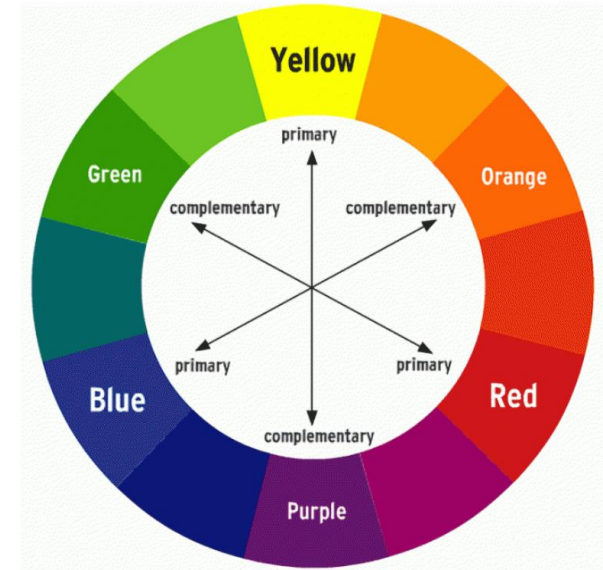
Color

Like light, color helps to set the mood of an image and can play a significant role in touching the viewer on an emotional level.

Color can also be used as a compositional tool where contrasting colors play a very important role.

Color is one of the main factors responsible for making a photo feel mysterious, exciting, sad, or gloomy. Evoking emotions is important in creating strong images and color is one of our primary tools to do this.

By using appropriate colors in our images we can better convey different emotions and make a stronger impact on the viewer.



Moment

A strong moment is more than highlighting a particular subject or action in time. Creating a moment in a photograph should be about having all the elements in a frame come together as to tell a captivating story, when every part of the picture interacts with the other parts in a way that the viewer might think – wow this is special and probably doesn't happen that often.

Not every photo will be able to have special moments where all the parts come together perfectly, but again we should be thinking about this when shooting so we can try to include more elements that create a stronger moment.

Not to forget, shooting at a particular time of the day adds power and meaning to the moment which means light also plays an important role here.



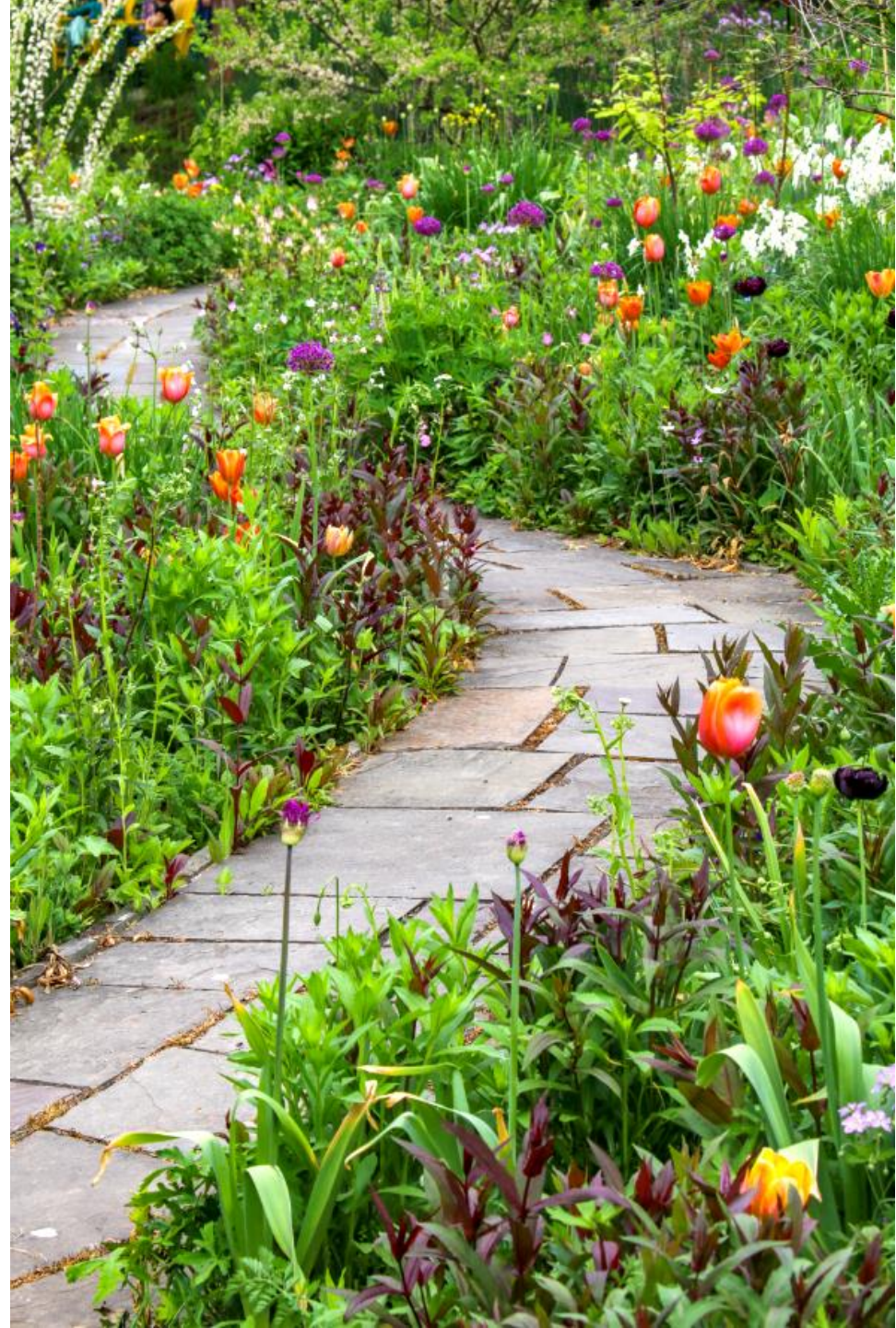
Composition

Composition is about putting together objects in the frame in such a way as to emphasize the parts you want to and make them stand out in a particular way.

Composition can often be very subjective, but good composition can turn an ordinary scene into an image that grabs the viewers attention.

There are numerous rules, principles and guidelines for creating better composed images, but in the end it's up to the photographer to find something that works for the given situation.

When composing photographs, it is better to keep an eye out for elements like lines, curves, shapes, textures, patterns, colors, negative space within the frame, so you can use them to compose brilliant photographs.



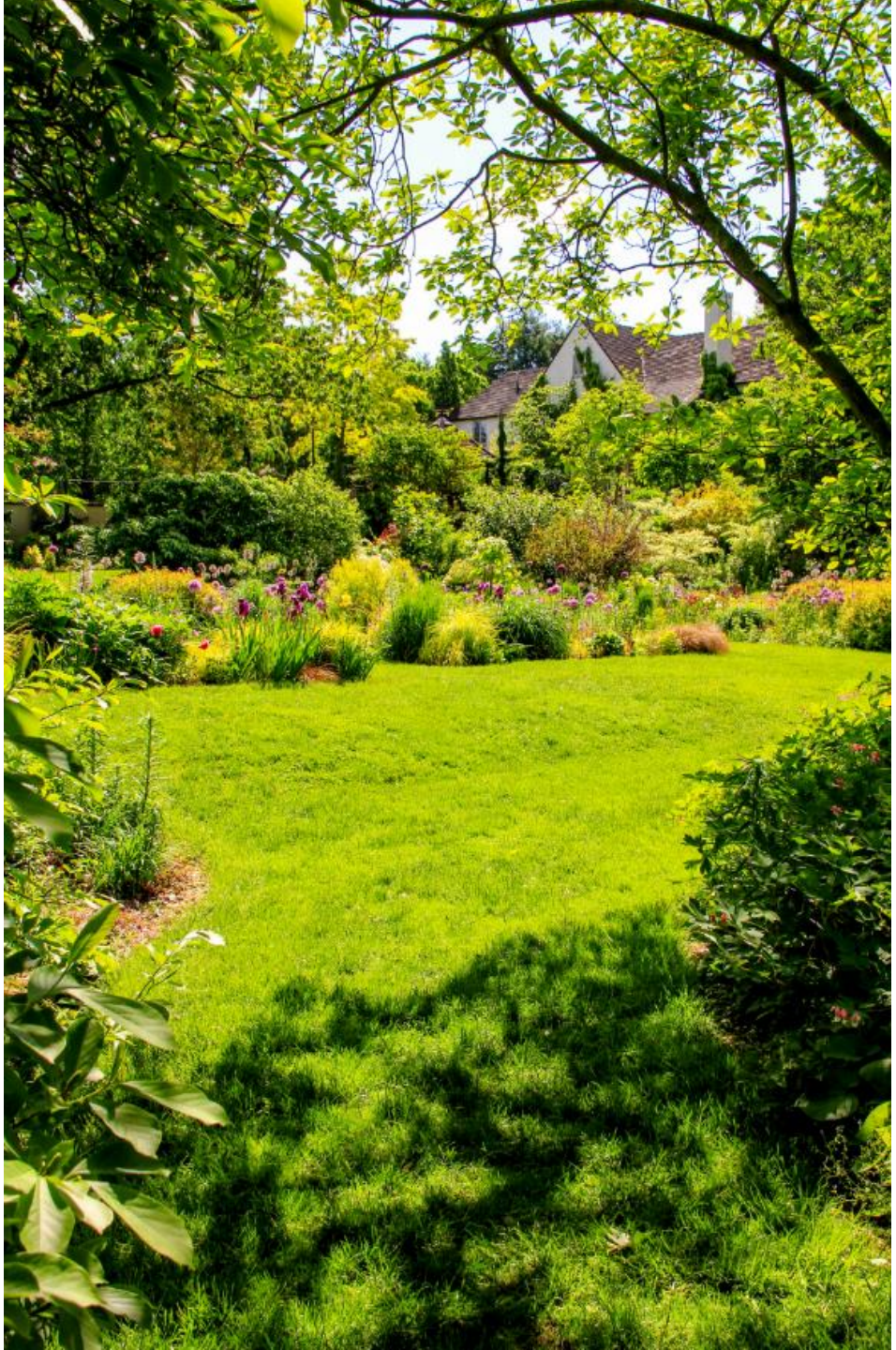
Photographer's Choice Of Distance To Their Subject

The distance the photographer chooses to be from their subject will affect the feeling and overall impact a photo has. It will also determine what focal length you need to shoot with in order to get all the important parts of the photo into the frame.

Like with all the previous four elements there is no right or wrong way, per se. It will vary depending on the situation and what the photographer wants to accomplish.

Certain images are more powerful if shot closer to the subject, making the viewer feel like they are there. Other images look much better at a further distance from the subject.

There should be a thought process though about why we choose to be certain distances from our subjects and how that will make the final image look.



Planning and Preparation



For photographing a garden:

Start by looking at and studying garden photographs online.

Preplan and visualize how you want the garden to look in pictures

Photograph the garden with the eyes before with a camera – what do you love about it – try to capture that

Plan a shot list before going out with the camera.

Consider the garden size and complexity: how many garden areas are there that you want to photograph – one or more?

When is the garden at its peak? Photograph it over several weeks as various plants mature.

Learn the basic rules of composition.

Think about shooting from different angles, perspectives, time of day, weather conditions.

Photographing A Garden

“Think of a garden as the sum of its parts—flowers, plants, structures, decorations, perhaps a pond. The key to portraying it is the establishing shot. "Picturing the garden as a whole is a prime goal and the establishing shot sets the scene."

So, first capture vistas (wide angle) that include all the elements of the garden; you'll get to the individual components, but the initial step is picturing the garden as the collection it is. Then zoom in for interesting vignettes. From there, select some close-up shots to add intimacy to the story

Don't limit yourself to one format, shoot horizontal and vertical images. Sometimes changing the camera's orientation will get rid of a distracting background or cause you to see a new element you had missed before.

Mix up the shots—include hardscape, borders, fences, and pathways. Try multiple angles to capture a unique view.

Early morning and late afternoon offer the best lighting of the day. Shooting during these times limits the harsh, bright light of the mid-day sun. Overcast skies also provide you with naturally diffused lighting. Some gardens or parts of, will be best shot with evening light, while others benefit from morning light.

Remember that a garden is a sum of its parts, so don't just photograph the flowering blooms. Photograph vegetables and trees, handmade objects or structures—the things that give the garden its personality.



The Big Picture

Start by shooting the whole garden - wide angle shot of the entire garden.



Vignettes

Then photograph
smaller sections of the
garden



Details

Then photograph
details in the garden



More Tips for Garden Photography

Be flexible: Don't be afraid to crouch down, shoot upward or shoot from above. Contort yourself to find new angles.

Tripod: Use it. Even the steadiest of hands isn't steady enough most of the time - **Try "lock focus:"** This is available on the iPhone and many Android phones. Tap and briefly hold the subject's image on the screen; the focus and exposure will adjust to fit the subject.

Be spontaneous: Nature is spontaneous. Bugs, birds and butterflies are gifts. Capture them!

Be click happy: Take more photos than you think you'll need.

Border Patrol: Before you depress the shutter, take an extra second to look at all four corners of the frame to consciously decide what to include and to exclude in the picture.

Horizon Patrol: Keep the horizons straight!

Focus and attention: to detail forces you to be more critical about the composition of each shot.

Look: for clean lines and strong colors.

Understanding Compositional Rules

Composition is what guides our eyes through a photograph and gives importance to the subject in relation to the rest of the photo.

It is one of the most important components of photograph, or any visual art for that matter, and can turn an ordinary scene to something special.

Composition through flow, direction, and visual balance, helps drive the story behind the image and grabs the viewer's attention.

And unlike many other photographic principles such as focus or exposure that have benefited from technological advancement, each photograph still requires you to personally decide on the overall composition.

Some Composition Rules for All Photography

- Rule of Thirds
 - Balance (elements in the scene)
 - Leading Lines
 - Foreground Interest and Depth
 - Fill the Frame
 - Framing
 - Simplicity and Minimalism
 - Viewpoint
 - Symmetry and Patterns
 - Background
-
- Remember, rules are meant to be broken! So don't be afraid to try different things.

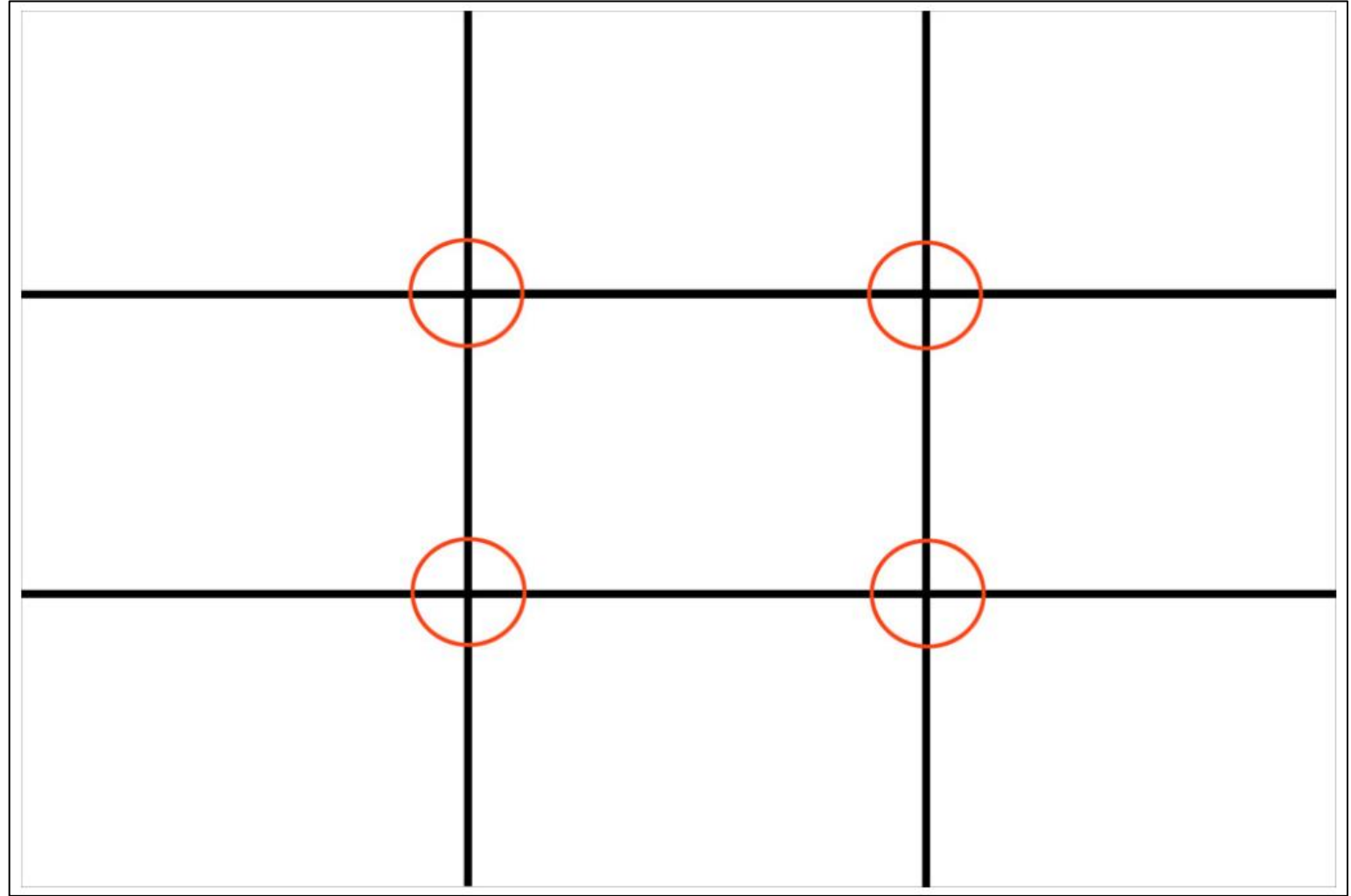
Rule of Thirds

Imagine that the image is divided into 9 equal segments by 2 vertical and 2 horizontal lines. The Rule of Thirds says that you should position the most important elements in the scene along these lines, or at the points where they intersect.

Doing so will add balance and interest to the photo. Some cameras even offer an option to superimpose a rule of thirds grid over the LCD screen, making it even easier to use.

When getting ready to take a photograph, first, determine the Focal Points. You choose a plant, a garden structure or some other object to feature in the photograph.

Presumably, every photograph should lead the viewer's eye to a deliberately chosen focal point.



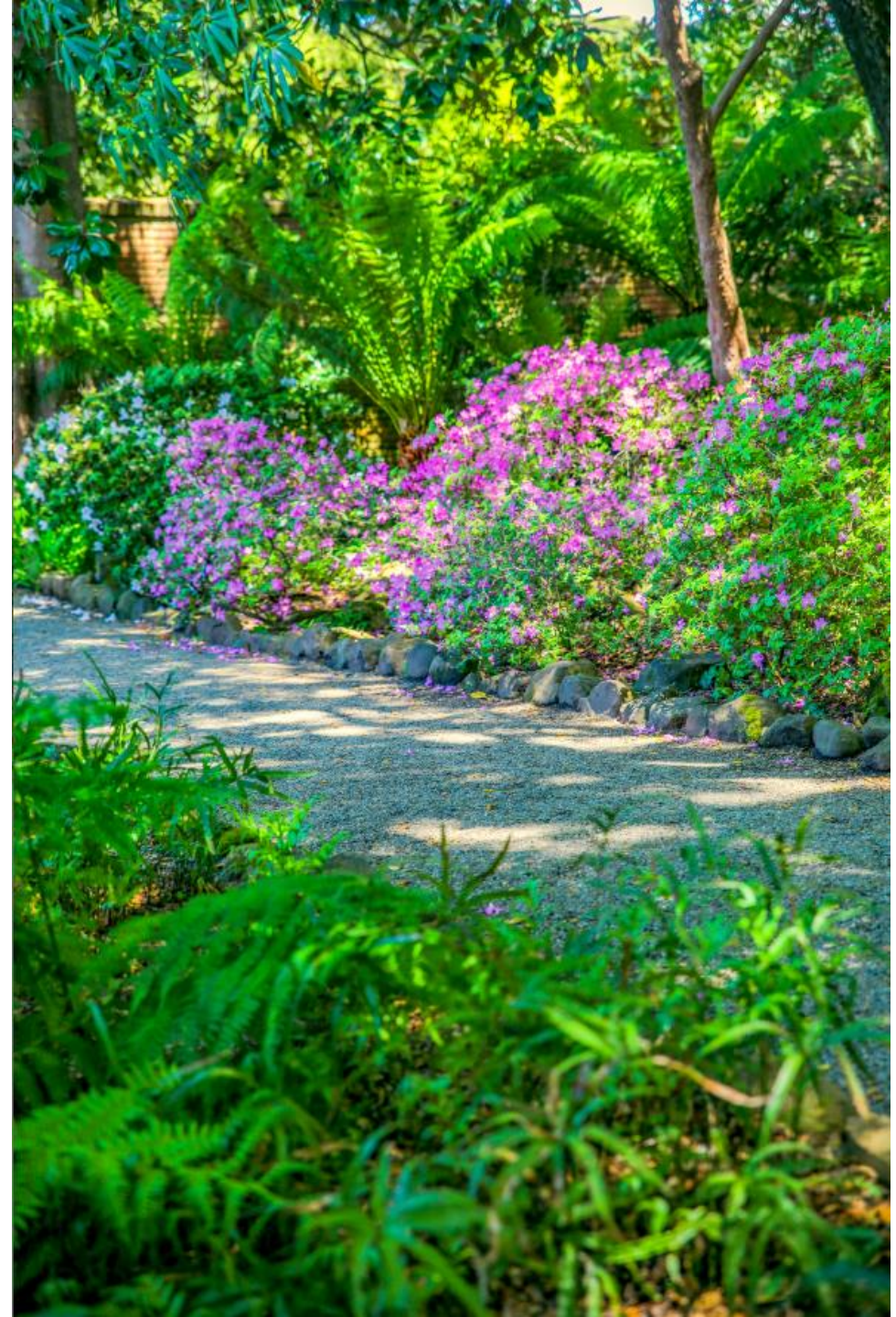




Balance

Placing the main subject off-center, as with the rule of thirds, creates a more interesting photo, but it can leave a void in the scene which can make it feel empty.

You should balance the "weight" of the subject by including another object of lesser importance to fill the space.



Balance



Balance



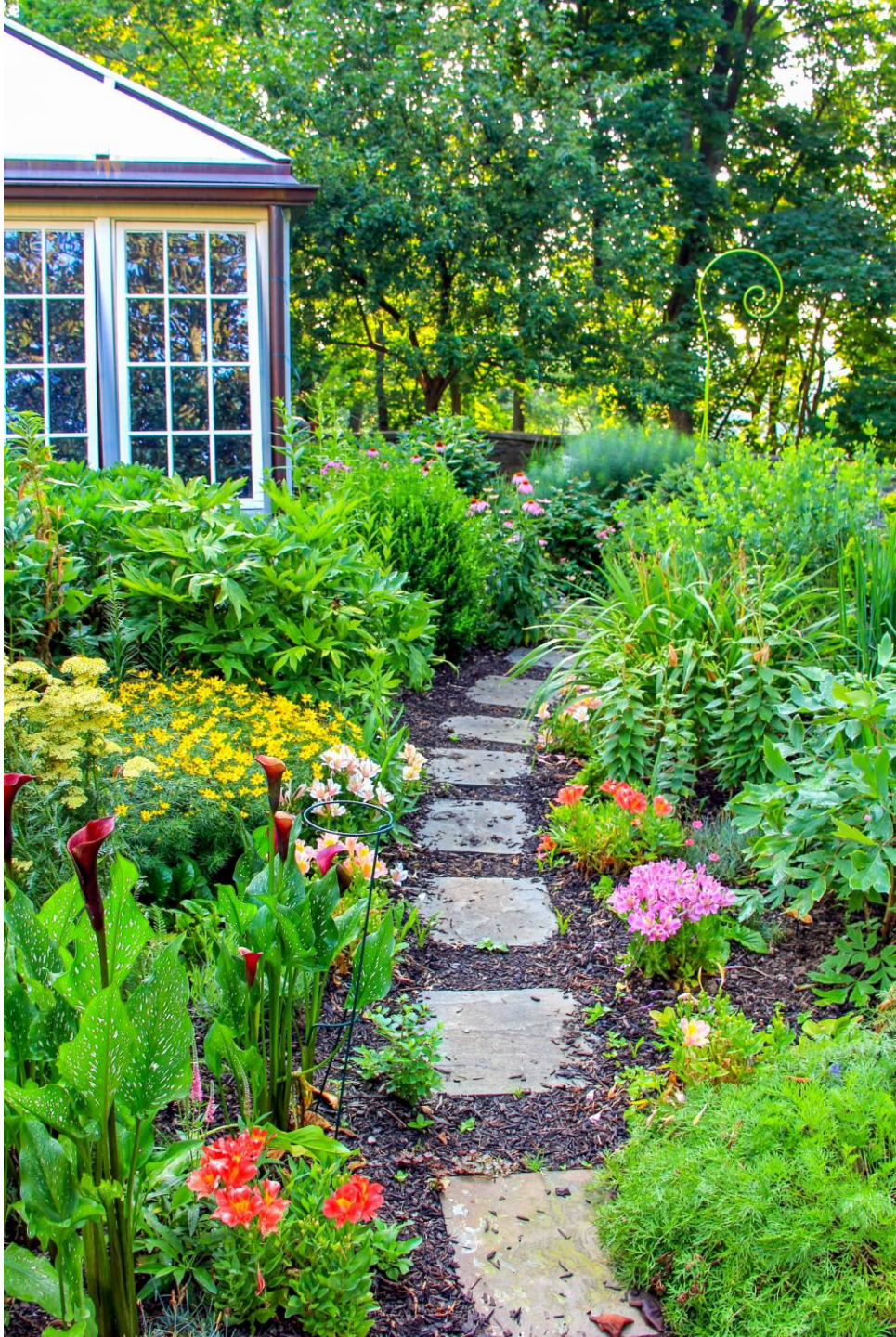
Leading Lines

Leading Lines: The photographer should see fences, walls, streams, rows of plants, hedges, or pathways as lines within the overall composition of a photograph and use those lines to strengthen the overall composition.

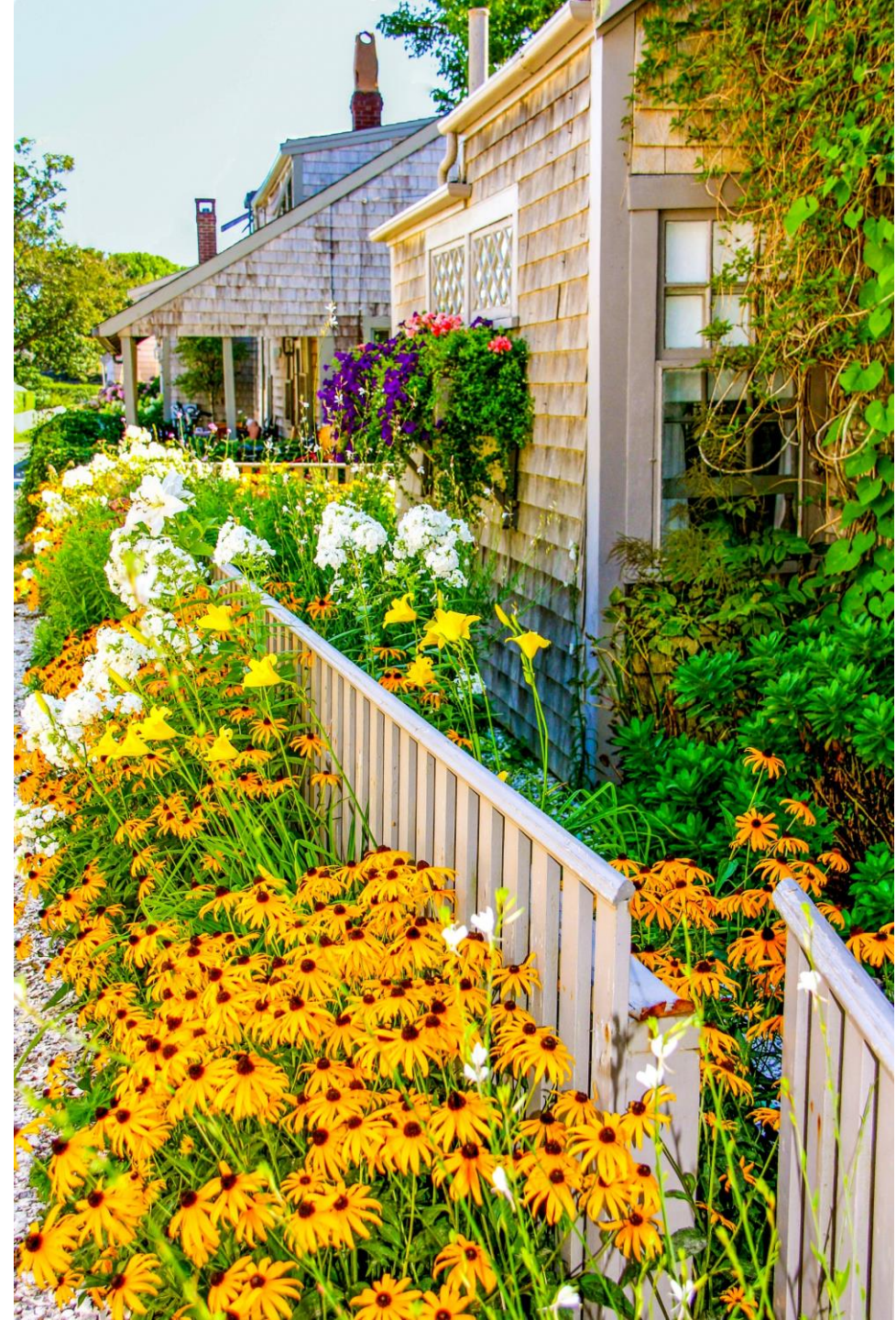
Lead the eye in: Framing the image so that a pathway in a garden leads and invites the viewer's eye into the image can be really powerful. It can help viewers imagine themselves being there more clearly and lead them through the garden scene.







Leading Lines



Foreground Interest and Depth

Because photography is a two-dimensional medium, we need to choose our composition carefully to convey the sense of depth that was present in the actual scene.

You can create depth in a photo by including objects in the foreground, middle ground and background. This will also draw the eye through the image.

Another useful composition technique is overlapping, where you deliberately partially obscure one object with another. The human eye naturally recognizes these layers and mentally separates them out, creating an image with more depth.



You can edit/crop the images tightly, so that everything has a purpose and feels balanced

Foreground Interest and Depth

Overlapping

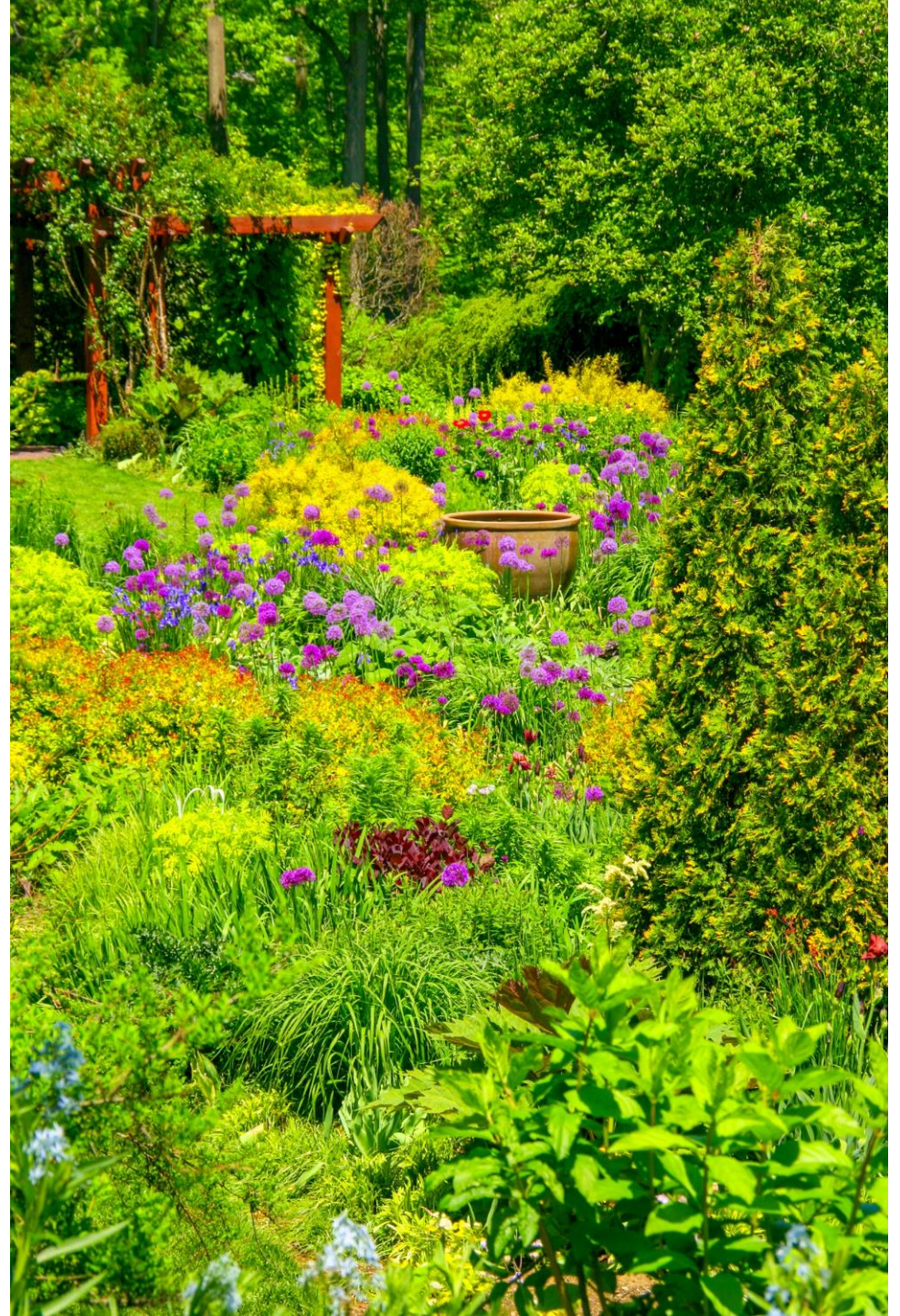


Fill the Frame

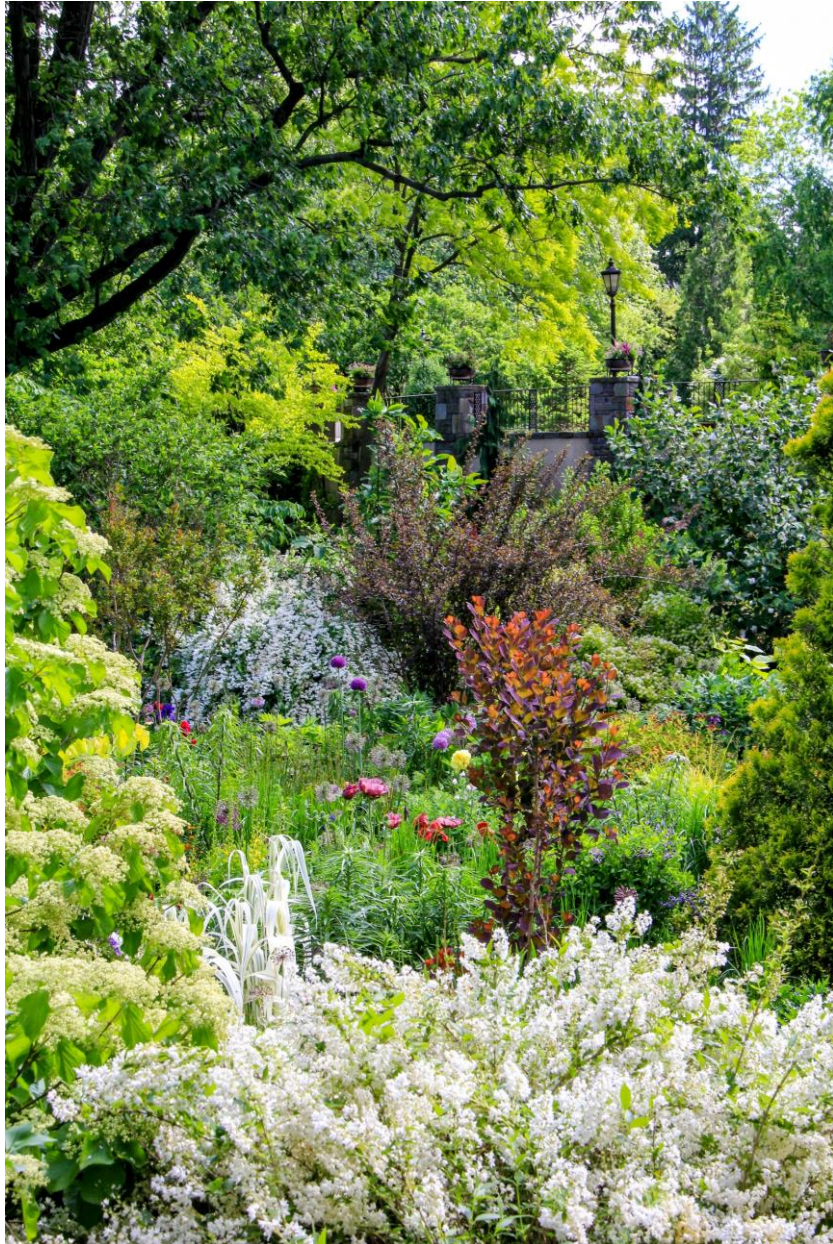
In photography terms, the frame refers to the edges of the photograph of the camera's viewfinder, so filling the frame means to make the subject(s) a significant part of the final photograph and leaves no doubt what you intended to capture.

There are several ways to fill the frame with just the subject; either use a telephoto lens or move closer to the subject physically. In both the cases you can achieve similar results. Filling the frame with just the subject has an added advantage. The intensity with which a viewer looks at the picture increases.

A third way is cropping. Many times, a photo can lack impact because the main point of interest is so small that it blends in with the background. By cropping around the main object, this eliminates any background distractions to get the attention of the viewers on the main subject of the picture.

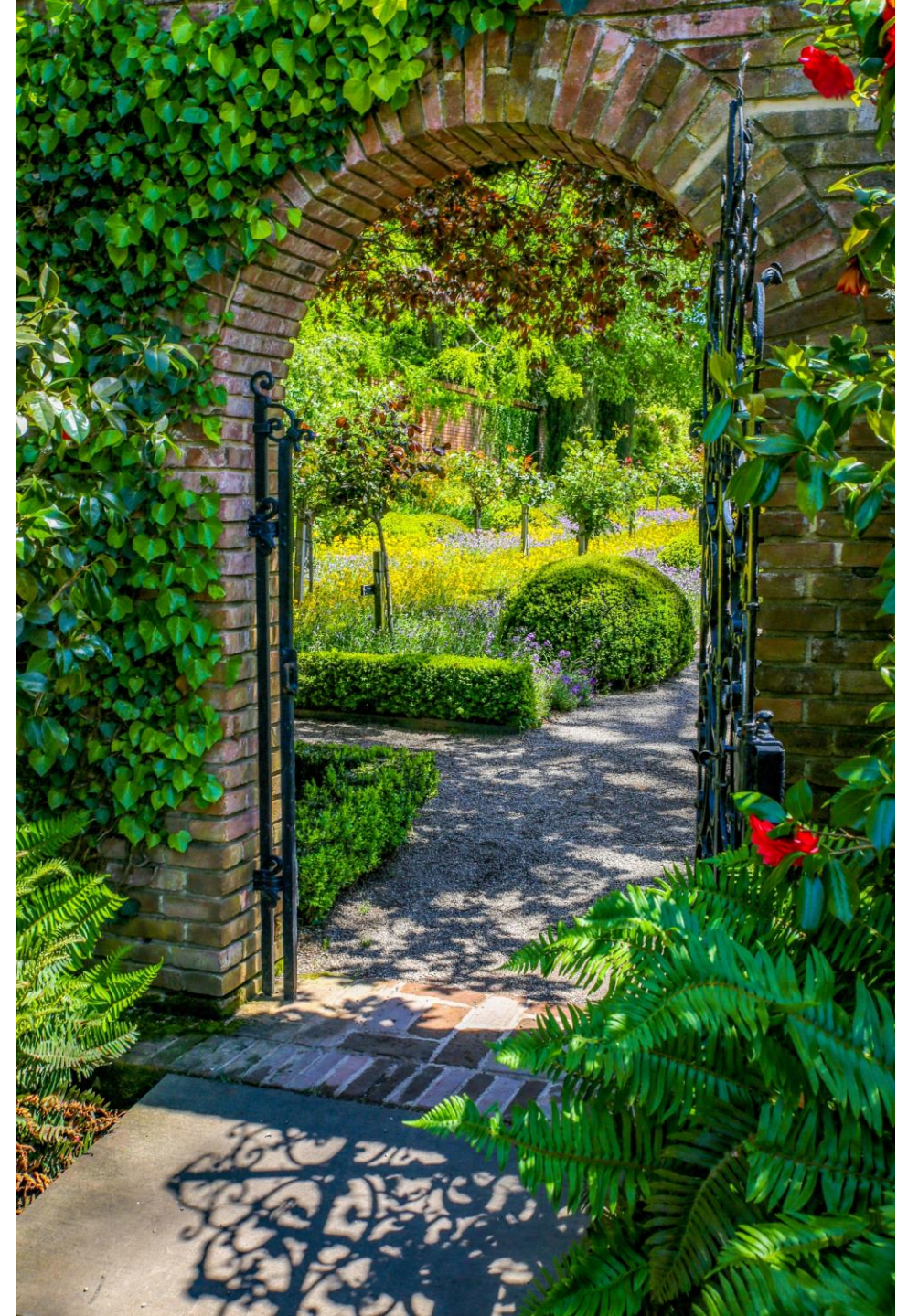


Fill the Frame

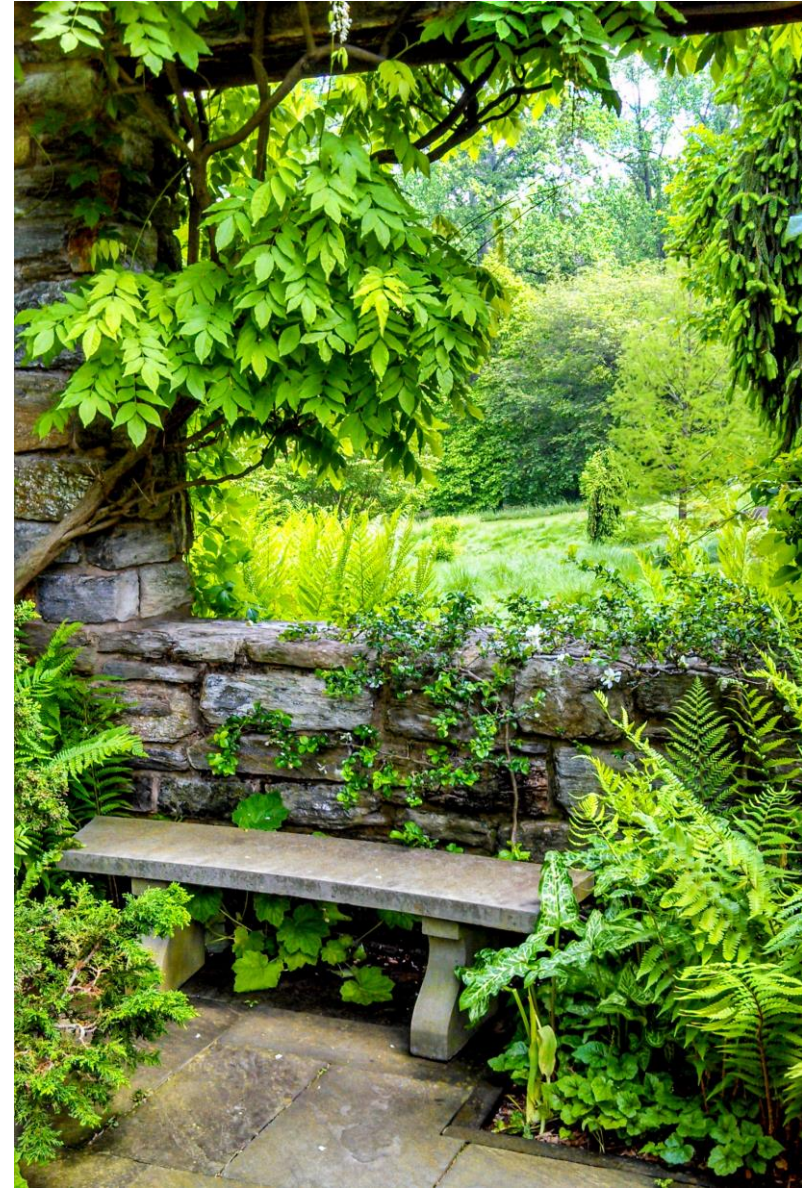
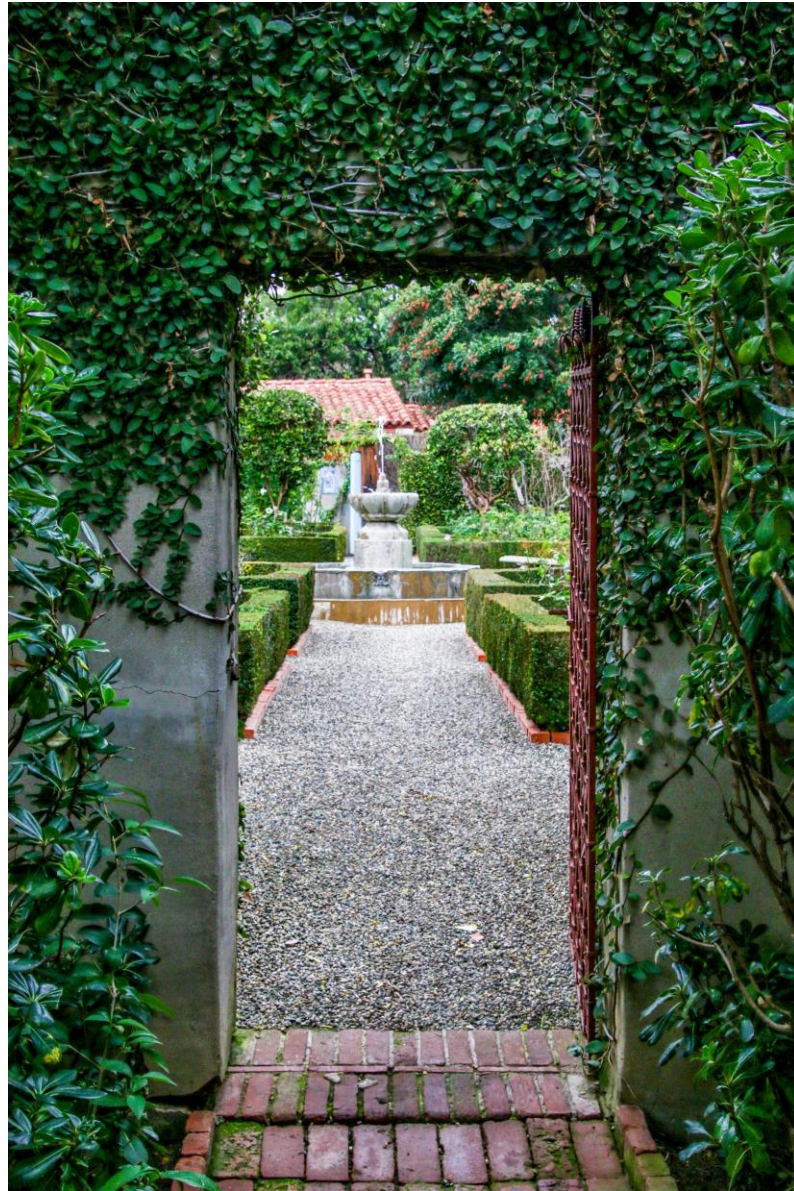
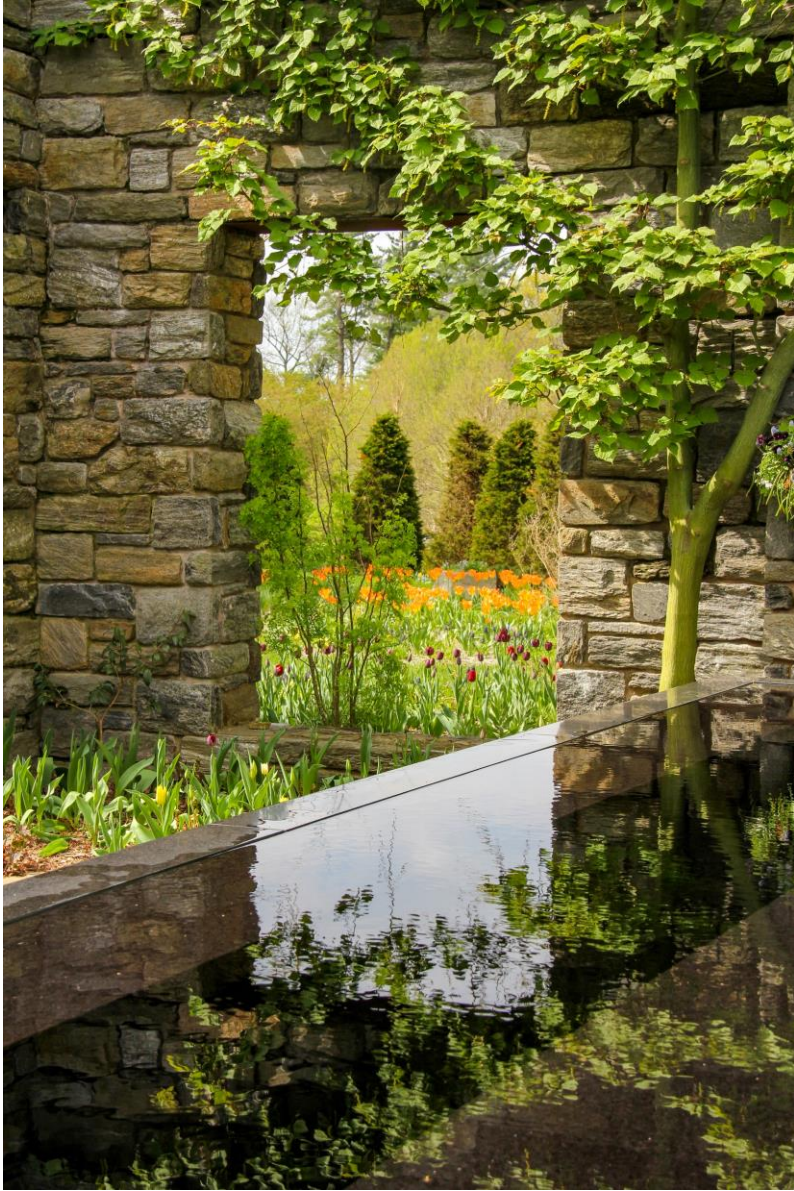


Framing

The world is full of objects which make perfect natural frames, such as trees, archways and holes. By placing these around the edge of the composition you help to isolate the main subject from the outside world. The result is a more focused image which draws the eye naturally to the main point of interest.



Framing



Simplicity and Minimalism

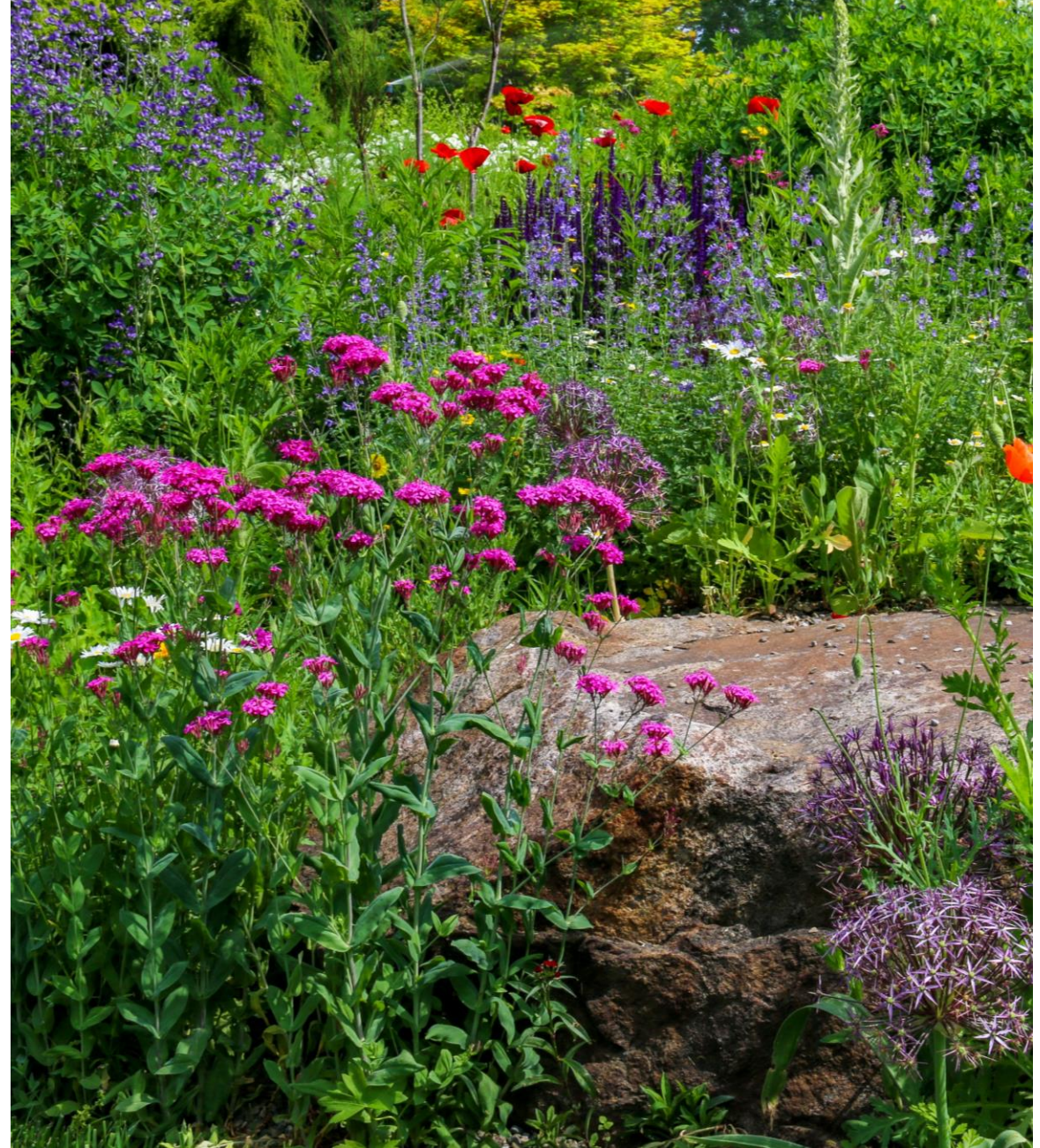
Know the Focus

Having too much going on in the frame can mean the person who's looking at it just keeps searching for a point of focus and soon gets tired of looking when they can't find one. This doesn't mean you can't have secondary points of focus; it just means you should make every effort to make sure they don't steal all the limelight.

Often a photo will lack impact because the main subject is so small it becomes lost among the clutter of its surroundings. By cropping tightly around the subject, you can eliminate the background "noise", ensuring the subject gets the viewer's undivided attention.



Simplicity and Minimalism



Simplicity and Minimalism



Viewpoint

Before photographing the garden, take time to think about from where you will stand to photograph it. The viewpoint has a big impact on the composition of the photo, and as a result it can greatly affect the message that the shot conveys.

Rather than just shooting from eye level, consider photographing from high above, down at ground level, from the side, from the back, from a long way away, from very close up, and so on.

You can shoot from a window or balcony or you might consider using a ladder to get up high to show the entire garden and surrounding area if it plays an important role in the garden.

Shoot from Up High to get a Wide-Angle view



Viewpoint

From above



Eyelevel



Symmetry & Patterns

We are surrounded by symmetry and patterns, both natural and man-made., They can make for very eye-catching compositions, particularly in situations where they are not expected.

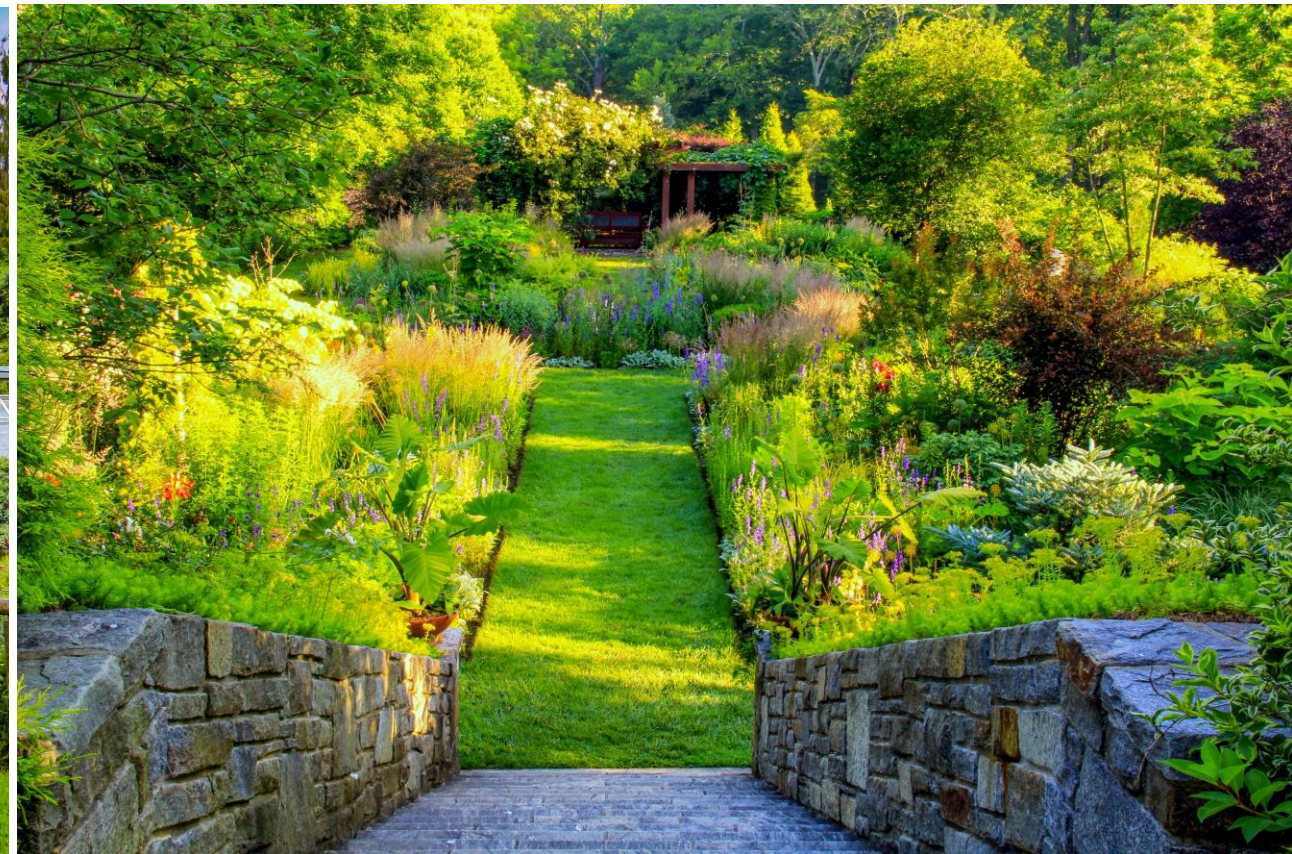
Another great way to use them is to break the symmetry or pattern in some way, introducing visual tension and a focal point to the scene.

Shots, where there's symmetry in them such as lamp posts or a long line of trees or a series of arches, can also be used to guide the eye to a single point (same as leading lines)

Symmetry can also involve non-related objects that resemble each other in shape, color or texture. Just remember you need a focus point otherwise it won't work as well.



Symmetry/Patterns



Symmetry/Patterns



Background

Reduce clutter

Keep the background clean of any distracting elements. Usually, with garden photography minimalism is a good thing. Most of the times you can get a clean background just by changing the position to try new perspectives.



Remove distracting elements

Avoid capturing distracting elements, preferably while shooting or crop later when editing as a last resort. These could be garden hoses, distracting leaves, power lines, and so on.

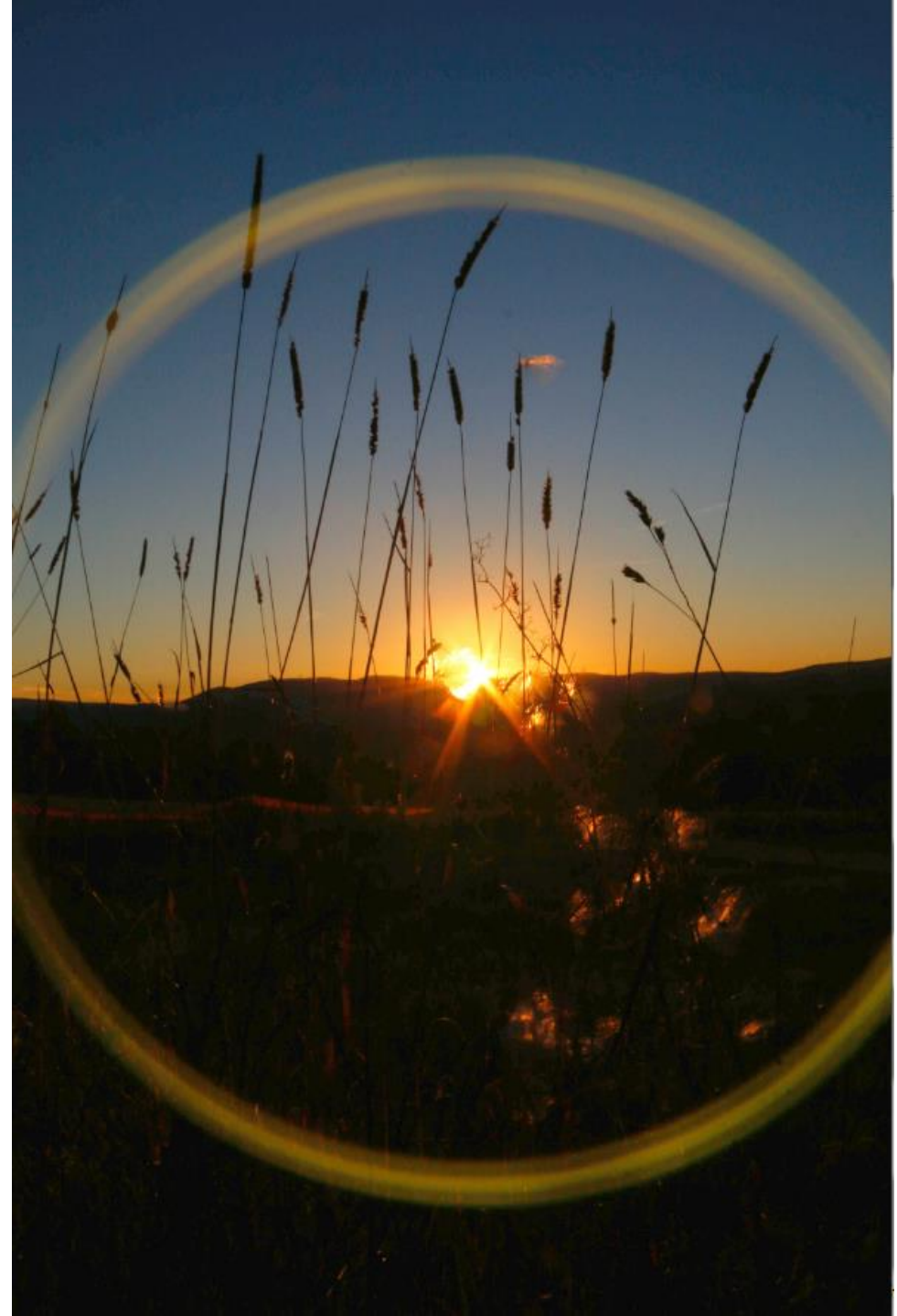
You want the viewer to look at the whole image and not that one distracting element and you don't want the final image to lack impact because the subject blends into a busy background

Experimenting and Breaking the Rules

With the dawn of the digital age in photography we no longer have to worry about film processing costs or running out of shots.

As a result, experimenting with our photos' composition has become a real possibility; we can fire off tons of shots and delete the unwanted ones later at no extra cost.

Take advantage of this fact and experiment with the composition - you never know whether an idea will work until you try it.



The Supporting Actors - Garden Elements

In Addition to Plants

Photograph all the elements in the garden

Artistic Objects	Hardscapes	Architectural Objects	Water features
Figurines	Pathways	Gazebos	Ponds
Birdbath	Steps	Bridges	Fountains
Statues & Sculptures	Stepping stones	Trellises	
Spinners & Mobiles	Walls	Gates	
Chimes	Decks	Greenhouse	
Obelisks	Terraces	Arches	
Potted plants	Retaining Walls	Arbors	

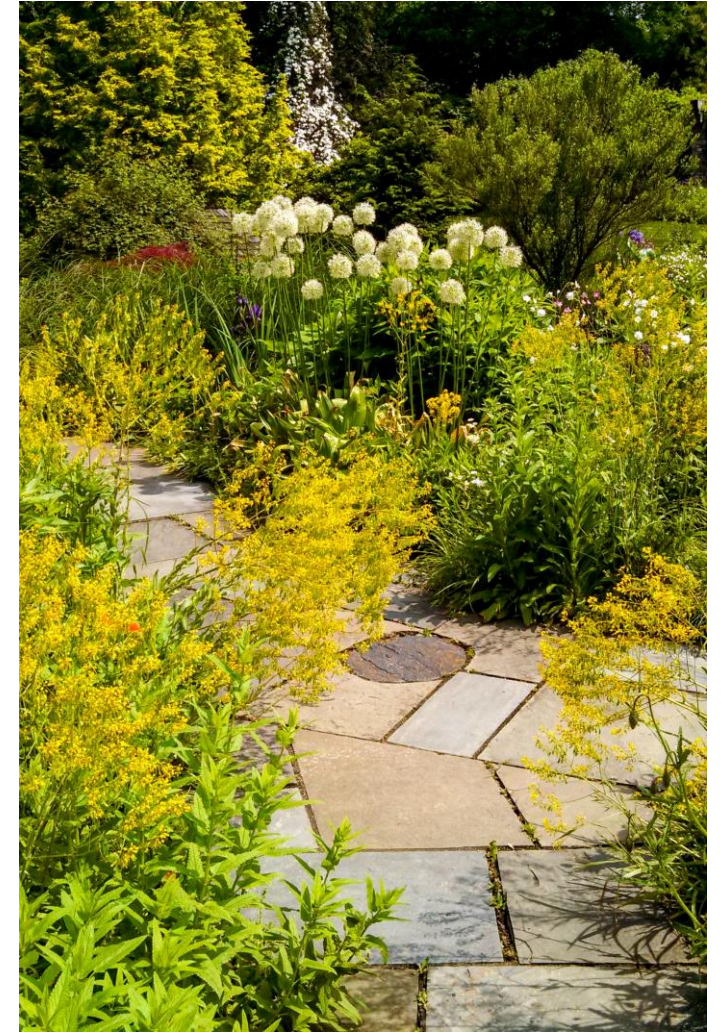
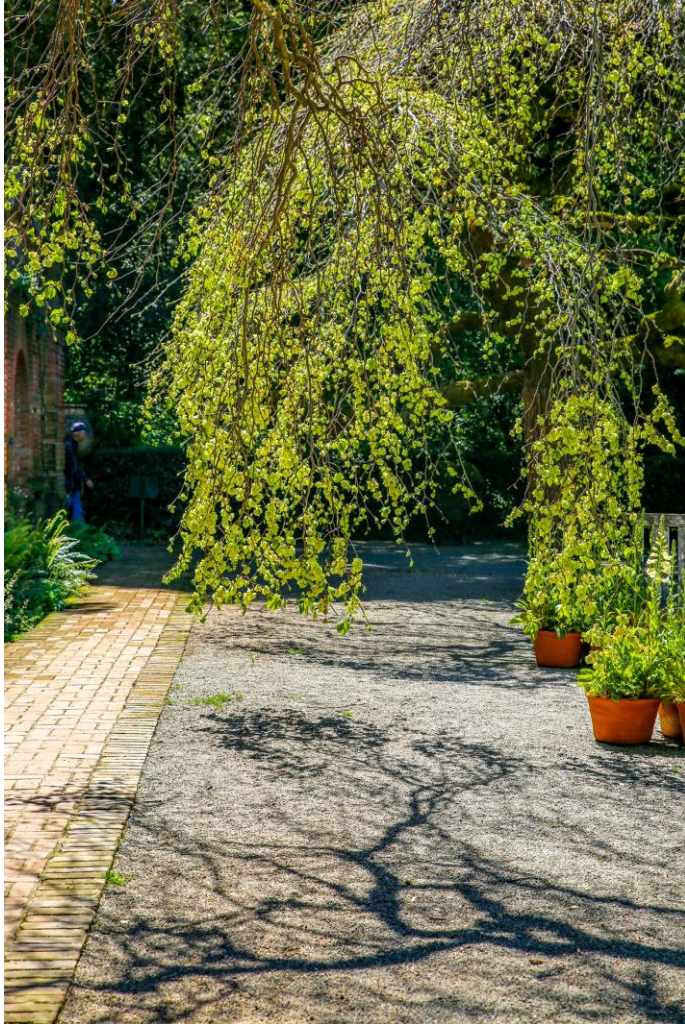
Artistic Objects



Artistic Objects

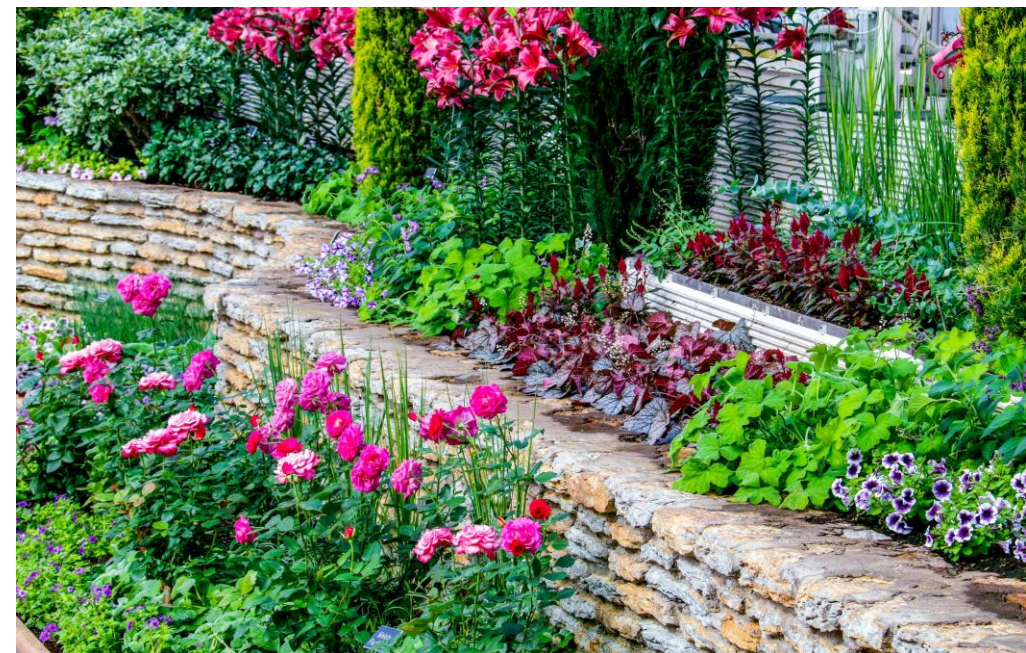


Hardscapes

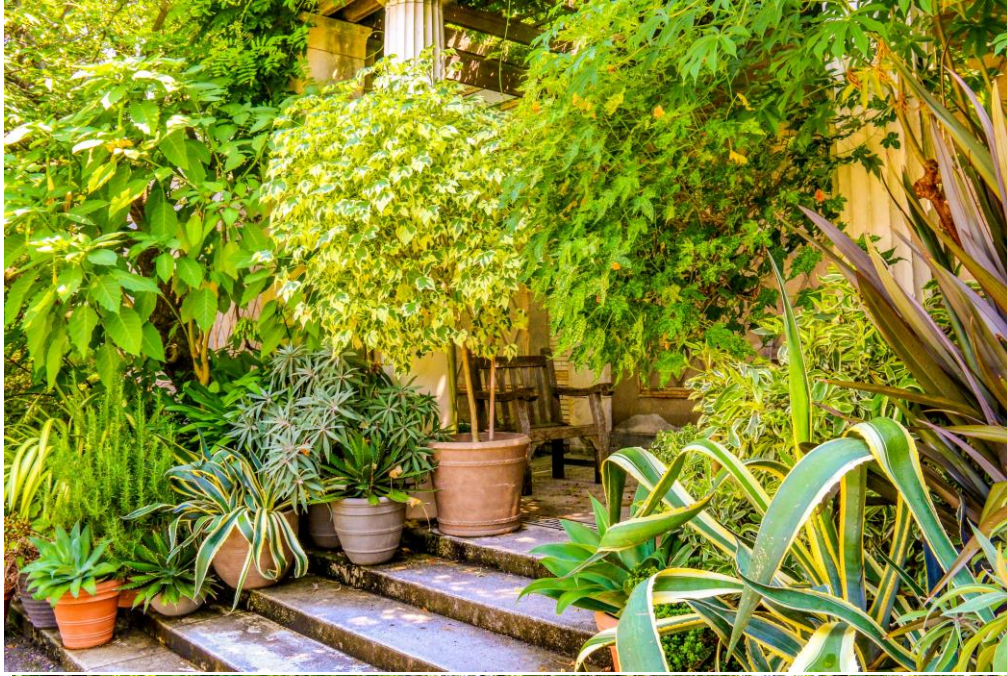


Hardscape can be thought of as "hard," yet movable, parts of the landscape, like gravel, paving, and stones. They are inanimate objects. Hardscape is solid and unchanging. Other examples of hardscape include retaining walls, pavers for paths or patios, outdoor kitchens, water features, gazebos, decks, and driveways. It can be natural, like stone, or manmade, like an outdoor structure or a planter.

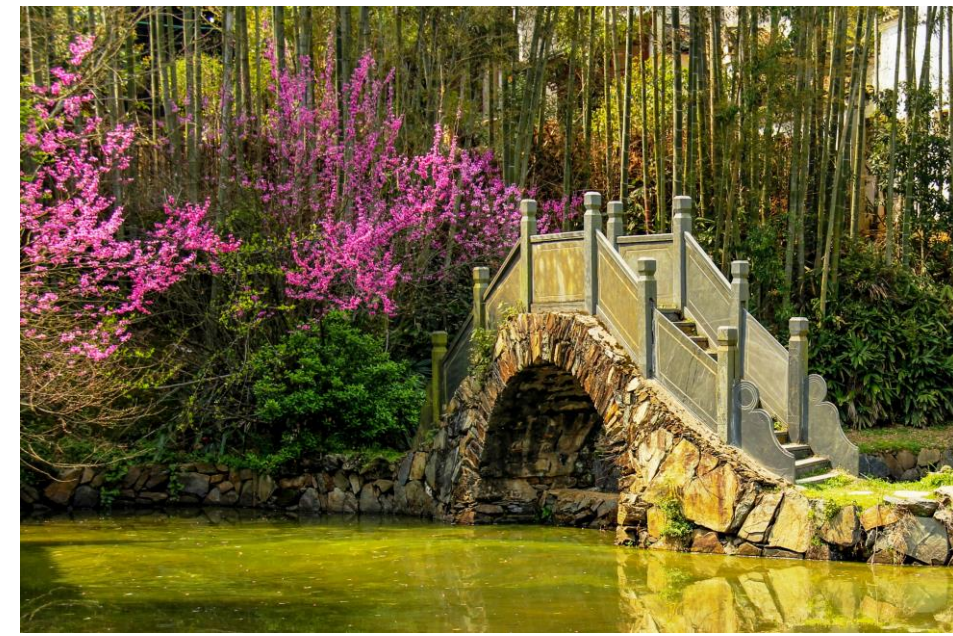
Hardscapes



Hardscapes



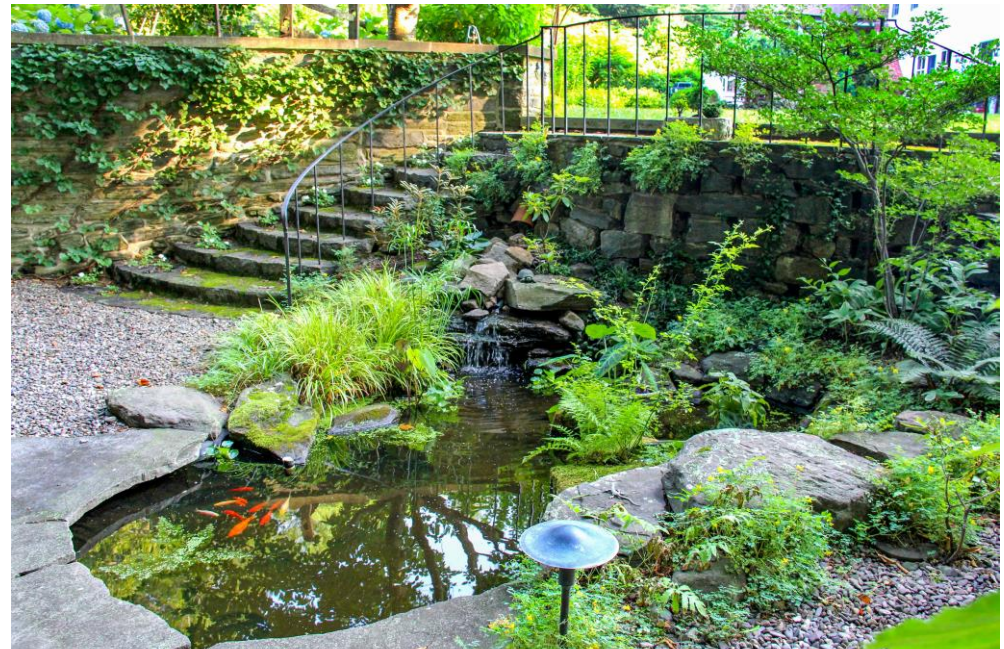
Architectural Objects



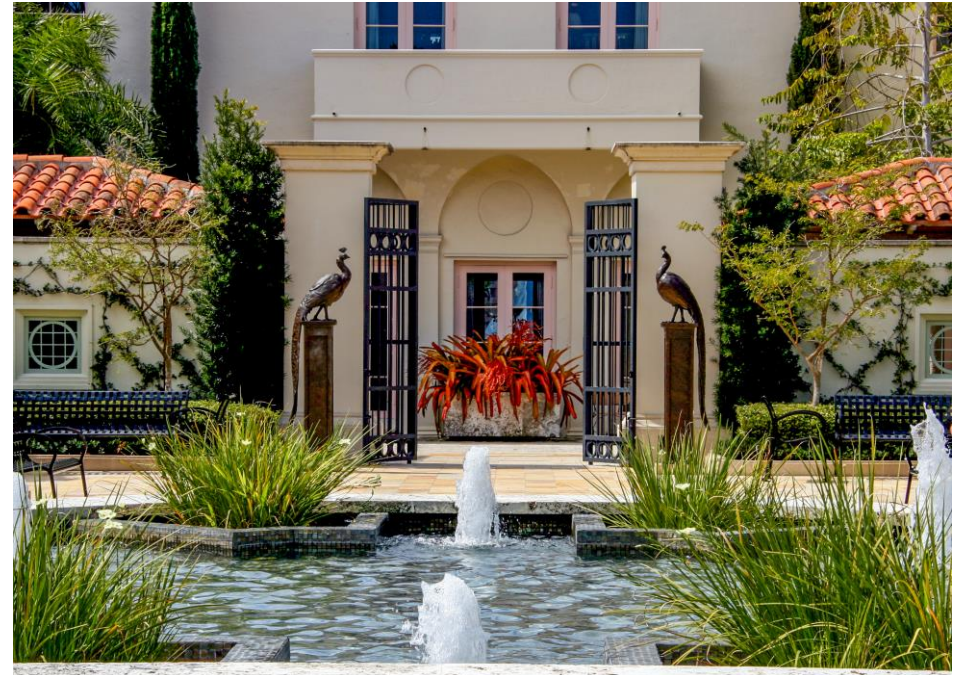
Architectural Objects



Water Features



Water Features



Lighting and Conditions

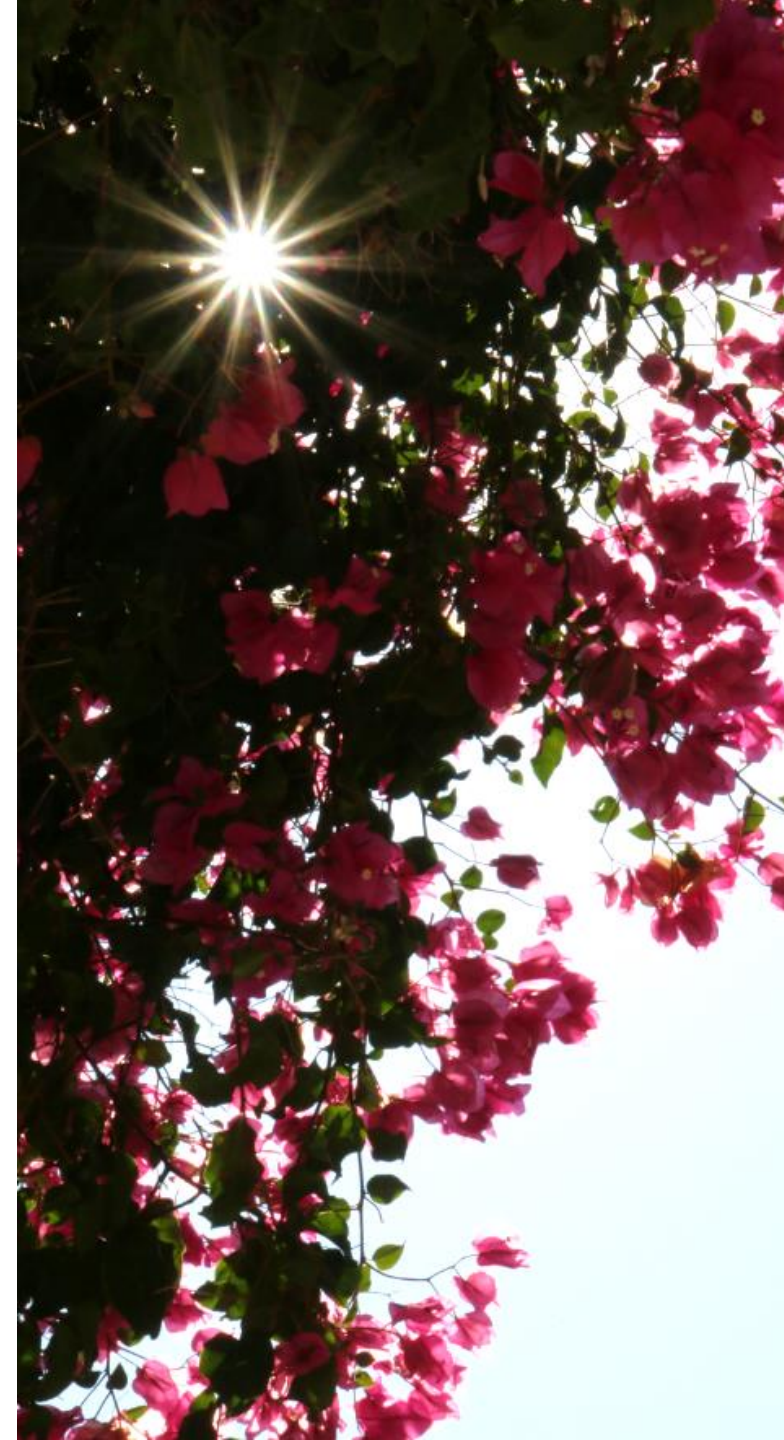
Light is the core of photography. There is nothing quite as calming as light that is consistent and even. It is critically important but also very easy to overlook when you are excited about photographing the garden.

A common misconception about taking pictures is that the brighter the sun and the “prettier” the day, the better the pictures will be. But that is not the case. Though a bright sunny day is wonderful to enjoy, midday is not a good time for garden photography. The shadows are harsh. The colors shift and change.

To avoid harsh shadows, shoot mostly in the early morning hours or towards sunset when the sun is lower in the horizon. The light during these times of day is called: The Golden Light.

Gardens can look quite different in the early morning and at sunset. Check both light conditions to decide which one you prefer, and which type of light makes the garden look its best.

If you must shoot during the day, overcast is almost always best for up-close shots. Clouds diffuse light so you don't have hard shadows. Colors really shine against Mother Nature's most neutral backdrop. But beware of flat lighting which can occur during overcast days.



Different Types (Direction) of Lighting



Flat light

Can occur during overcast days for when you have the light source facing directly at the front of the subject. Flat lighting on a subject will mean that it is well lit, but you are unable to see any shadows. Shadows are needed to add depth and contrast. Retaining shadows in the images can help give you a natural contrast, add drama and evoke mood. Shadows are a fantastic tool when you are trying to create beautiful garden photos.



Top Lighting

Occurs during midday hours on a bright sunny day. Normally for garden photography, top lighting is to be avoided as it does not cast any shadows and therefore does not convey texture, form and shape which are so important to emulate dimension in a garden photograph.



Front Lighting (The Golden Hour)

The Golden Hour is generally thought to be the hour after sunrise, and the hour before sunset. The light casts a warm glow because the sun strikes at a low angle creating softer light and longer shadows.



Back Lighting

Backlight is light that comes from behind the subject. This is commonly seen in photos taken during the golden hour, when the sun is low in the horizon and starting to set but can be done at all hours of the day. Back lighting is difficult to shoot not only because of the extreme brightness between the subject and background but also because lens flare becomes an issue.



Side lighting

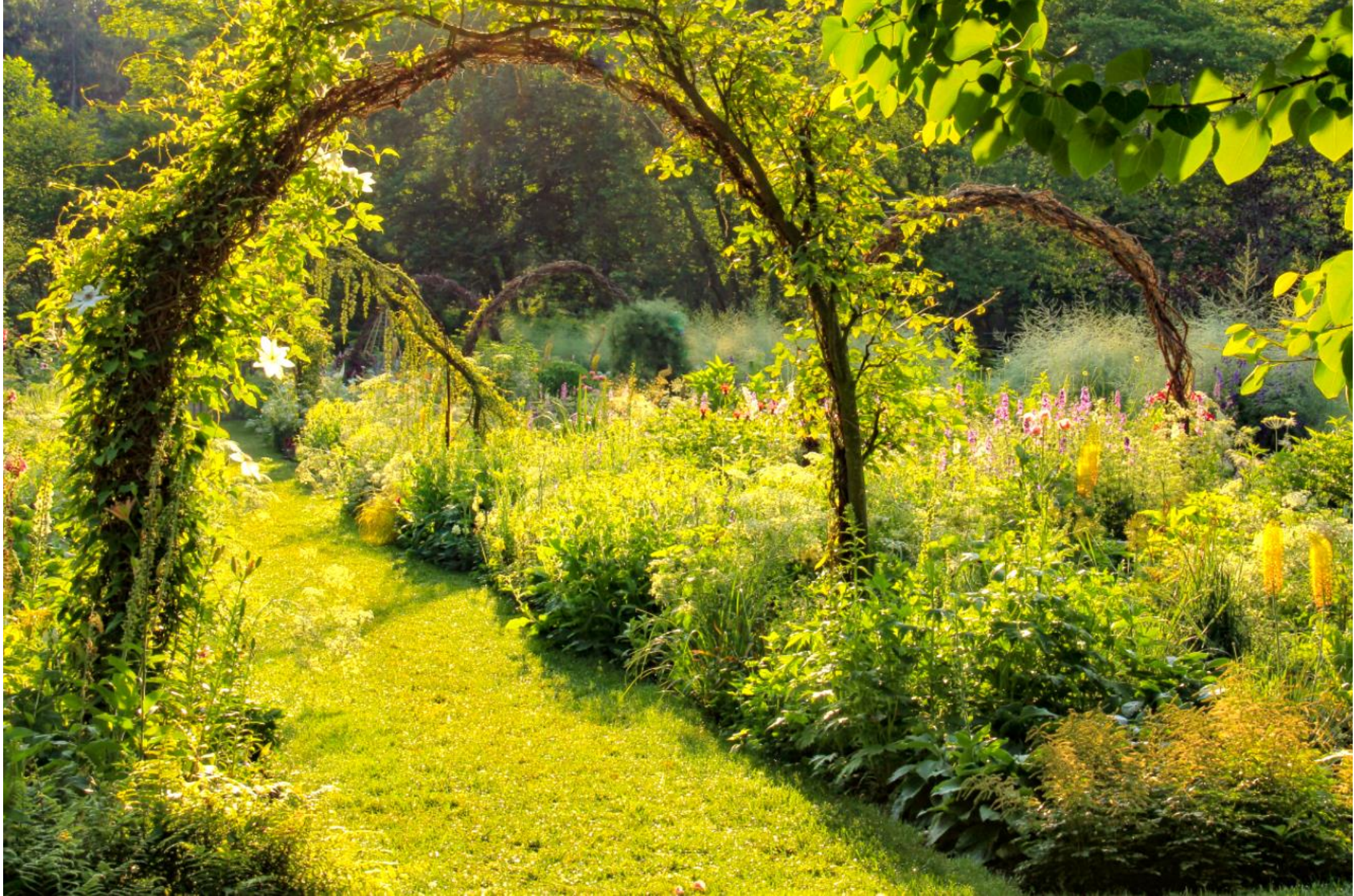
When the light source is directly to the side of the subject, you get side lighting. This means that one **side** of a subject will be lit, and the other **side** will be in shadow. It produces tiny shadows that give the subject some texture.

Harsh Midday
Light



The Golden Hour

Soft warm light



Examples of Flat Light



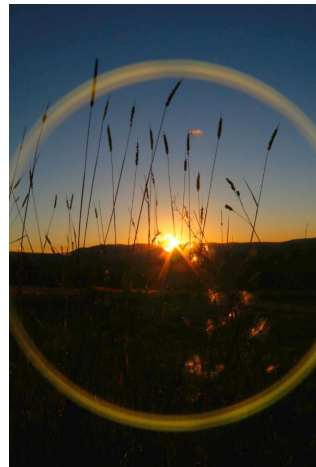
Use a Reflector

to Avoid Lens Flares and Hard Shadows

A reflector is an affordable piece of equipment that will help you a lot in the garden photography. First of all, you can use it to create shadows for the subjects.

If you see that there are hard shadows, just place the reflector between the light source and the subject to block the direct light, as if it was a parasol.

You can ask somebody to hold it for you. If you are alone holding the reflector while you shoot might be difficult. A solution is that you place the camera on a tripod and set the camera shutter timer release. During the countdown, take the reflector and hold it in place to shade the subject.



Reflectors are also useful for reducing lens flare when shooting in backlight. Flare is produced when light hits the front element of the lens. Although a bit of flare might be beautiful, it can also ruin the photo.

You can use the reflector to stop light from hitting the lens directly. Place it on top of the camera while shooting. Moving it around until you find the position where it blocks the light that creates the flare.



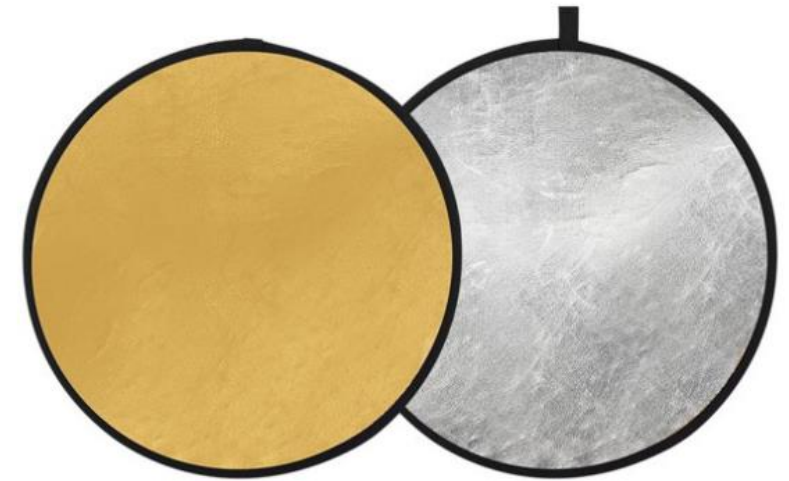
Equipment



Professional Camera Tripod Stand Mount + Phone Holder
for Cell Phone iPhone 11/11 Pro XS XR X 8 7 6 6S Plus
Samsung Galaxy Note S10/S10E/ 9/8 S9 S8 S7 S6
Edge(Plus), LG G7/G6

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In Review

Photography Basics - Five element of a great photograph

- **Good use of light**
- **Color**
- **Tell a story**
- **Correct composition**
- **Distance to subject**

Planning and Preparation

- **Study garden photographs**
- **Visualize how you want to capture the garden – make a shot list**
- **Take more photos than you need**
- **Learn the basic rules of composition**

In Review

Tips for Photographing the garden

- Capture vistas, vignettes and details
- Shoot vertical and horizontal orientation
- Shoot when the light is best – The Golden Hour
- Shoot from different angles - from up high, from down low
- Use a tripod
- Take more pictures than you need
- Keep horizons straight
- Border patrol

In Review

Think about the **Composition** before you press the shutter button

- Rule of Thirds
- Balance (elements in the scene)
- Leading Lines
- Foreground Interest and Depth
- Fill the Frame
- Framing
- Simplicity and Minimalism
- Viewpoint
- Symmetry and Patterns
- Background
- Break the rules!



In Review

Photograph all the supporting actors in the garden

- Artistic Objects
- Hardscapes
- Architectural Objects
- Water Features

Lighting and Conditions

- Shoot during the Golden Hours or when it is overcast
- Avoid midday overhead harsh light
- Avoid flat light
- Use a reflector

Equipment

- Camera
- Tripod
- Reflector

A vibrant garden scene featuring a well-maintained green lawn in the foreground. The middle ground is filled with a variety of plants, including tall grasses, purple flowers, and green shrubs. In the background, a white house with a dark roof is partially visible through the dense foliage of trees and bushes. The sky is bright and blue with some light clouds. The overall atmosphere is bright and cheerful.

**Happy Shooting!
Thank You!**