

focus



a publication of the GCA Photography Committee

fall 2012



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FOCUS MISSION STATEMENT

The object of focus magazine of the Garden Club of America is to enhance the knowledge and enjoyment at all levels of involvement in the art of photography and to appreciate its unique blend of technical skill, knowledge of composition and creativity. Articles written express the opinion of the writers and are for the purpose of clarity and education about the photographic process, exhibiting and judging. The Garden Club of America and focus magazine do not endorse any product or service. All entries in Flower Shows are limited to members of GCA. By submitting your work to focus, you grant permission to publish your work on the GCA website accessible to the public, and not limited to the Members Area.

focus

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FROM THE EDITOR...

Welcome to a new year of Focus, a new editor, and some new members on the photography committee. Focus now has a horizontal format to conform to computer and tablet screens. We continue to publish award-winning photographs as well as articles to educate and inform. Please submit your award winners-Best in Show, Photography Creativity Award, Certificate of Excellence, and GCA Novice Award in Photography—and when appropriate include any descriptions of “how you did it.” There are many award winners out there and we would like to showcase them all.

In this issue we have the first of a series of articles by Libby Collins which she has generously shared from her book, *The Elegant Earth: Secrets of Beautiful Nature Photography*. The book shows how to design a beautiful photograph with art principles. Libby has lectured, published and exhibited extensively and the book is based on her lectures. Thank you to Libby for sharing with us.



A MESSAGE FROM PHOTOGRAPHY CHAIRMAN, GAY ESTES

Greetings and welcome to a new year in Photography. We have so appreciated your interest, submissions, input and your comments. We will continue bringing you our best efforts in our photography adventure. We have been so busy over the summer preparing new programs and connecting with the Website, and at last the Yellow Book is online to answer many of your questions. Moreover, we remain at the ready to help GCA members in any way: entering, staging, shooting and judging guidance (mentoring) as well as all-around education.

Technology is changing rapidly; post-production on the computer is now the equivalent of the darkroom, without chemicals or processing trays. It is difficult to keep up with technology improvements, but we are doing our best to learn and share with you. Even a cell phone can capture an once-in-a-lifetime image. The instructor in a course I took the other day stated, "Never expect to keep a camera more than five years!"

Meanwhile the appreciation of the elements and principles of composition remain the same, but we are all students in the realm of appreciation and recognition of what is truly distinctive.

We have our objectives for the next year:

- Expanding programs available to clubs and individuals, from beginners to photographers using post production techniques;
- Working with the Program Committee to compile a speaker list in accordance with GCA's rigorous standards;
- Cooperating with clubs or individuals, assisting with show

schedules and staging;

- Maintaining communications with each club's designated Photography Chairman;
- Assisting the Flower Show Committee (Photography is a subcommittee) to promote not only photography, but GCA flower shows in general, and encouraging the inclusion of the photography division in all shows;
- Assisting the Judging Committee in mentoring and education of all GCA members within the judging workshops and through GCAPSG seminars;
- Improving our communications through the GCA Website and maintaining an interest list of email recipients with opportunities to enter and fill shows;
- And finally, continuing the fine legacy of Blair Matthews Louis with Focus Editor Crissy Cherry to produce what we (blush) consider the finest in the fine family of GCA publications.

We have had lively discussions concerning mats or no mats, and manipulation or straight-out-of-the-camera. We will never be one hundred percent all together on every issue, but please look at the templates on the [Yellow Book page](#) of the GCA website to see for yourself how broad your opportunities are. We will publish some clever names of shows and class titles with the pictures of the entries that resulted, and, of course, we'll feature first-rate winning photographs.

In short, we wish to celebrate the joy of photography for all. It

meshes so well with our GCA and garden-related efforts in capturing a point in time whether it is a slice of urban growth, an uncultivated field or an intimate look at the heart of a flower or a pollinator.

The joy of digital cameras is that you can shoot lots of pictures at many angles, times of day, and aspects for no cost. Enjoy the experience.



Crissy Cherry, Lake Forest GC
Photo taken in an Arthur Meyerson class

NOTES FROM ARTHUR MEYERSON'S PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

by Mary Wood, Piedmont GC

1. Always try to include light, color, gesture, and a moment in photos.
2. Take responsibility for everything in your photos:

Foreground	All need to connect.
Middleground	
Background	
3. All the elements have to help convey what you are trying to say...that means the photo should be composed in the camera so that cropping is not indicated. "Cropping is an amputation," - *Ernst Haas*
4. Occasionally experiment by throwing your photo out-of-focus. That way you eliminate the subject matter and can see the basic composition and color balance.
5. Simplify = Try to say the most with the least.
6. Be your own severest critic.
7. Don't be afraid to edit out bad shots, because you never want to have to apologize for bad photos.
8. Three levels of growth in photography:
 - a. Notice the flaws when editing.
 - b. Notice the flaws while you are shooting.
 - c. You never even bother to put the camera to your eye.
9. Avoid preconceptions, otherwise you may be disappointed by what is not there and will overlook the obvious. (An example would be making just a "postcard" photo of the Taj Mahal.)

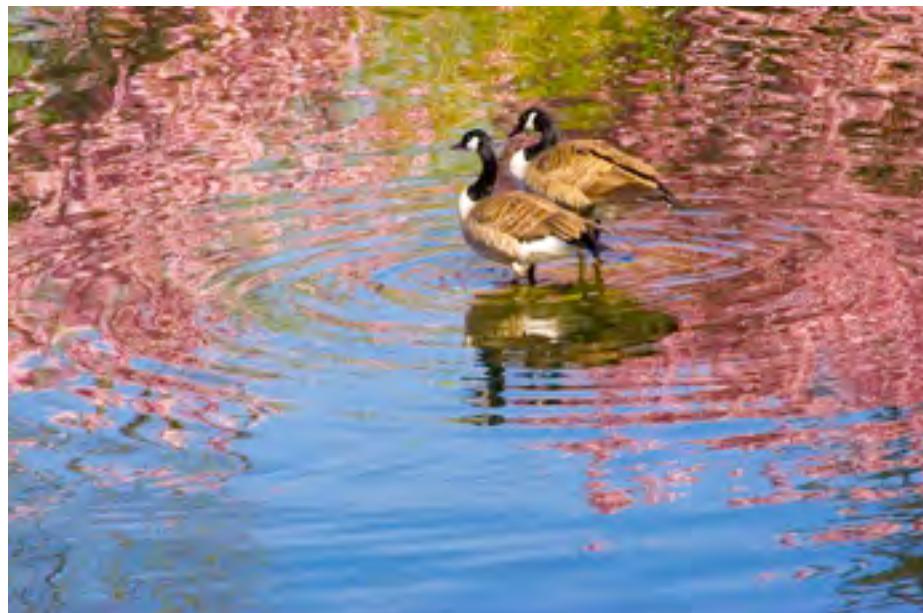
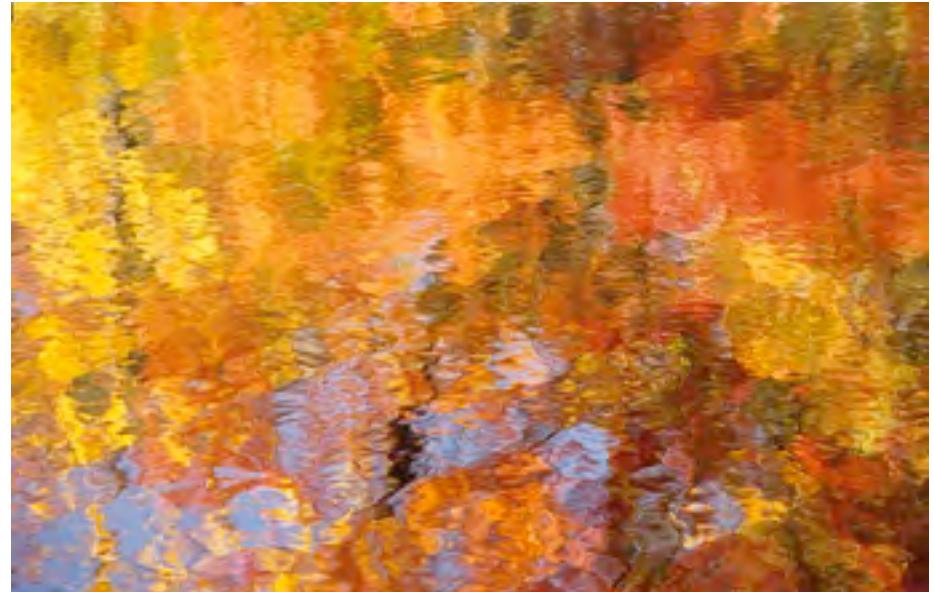
WATER REFLECTIONS

By Libby Collins

"If there is magic on the planet, it is contained in water." - Loren Eiseley

Lakes, ponds and streams have been called "Living Mirrors." Mirrors they are, reflecting an endless variety of color and shape. Whether still or in motion, reflections are stunning images, especially in the fall.

You can make the reflection itself the star of your show. Be sure the sun is lighting the far side of the river, pond or puddle. Eliminate sky and both shores from your viewfinder. You want just water. With a long lens, isolate a section of the reflection. Watch how the slightest breeze disturbs it. Look to right or left to see if ripples are coming your way from a swimming bird or the stroke of a boat paddle. Keep snapping as the ripples disturb and re-distribute your image. Toss in a stick or rock for more waves. The water will become a liquid melody, never the same.



It's important to give structure to reflections. A good reflection is designed with care. Soft-focus your eyes and look beyond reality until shapes emerge in the watery scene—a triangle or a curvy block of color. Compose with these. Notice bits of branches and trunks. Place them where you want to give a hard-edged structure or accent to softer color blocks. Keep clicking. Keep moving your viewfinder to another section. Shoot when the composition is right.

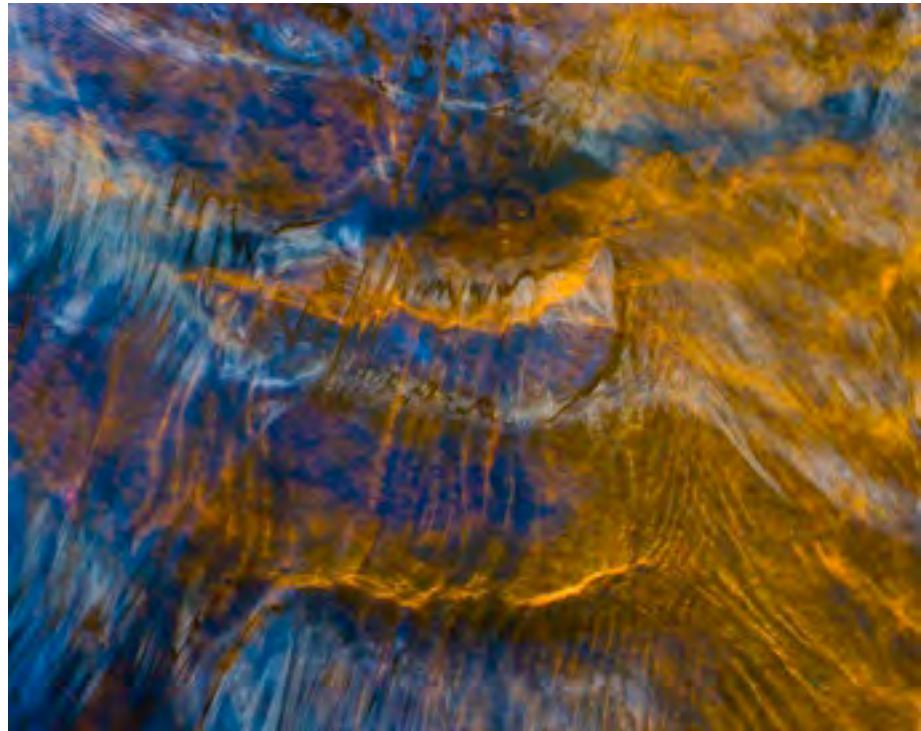


If leaves float on the surface, choose what you want to be sharp: focus on the leaves, or on the reflections beneath them.



For prints, try cropping a long narrow section to make an unexpected look.

Get a low viewpoint to make abstracts. Crouch down with your camera to compress near and far waves, especially with a long lens 200mm or more. Or, choose a high vantage point over a beach.



As the tide recedes, notice stranded strips of sand with water in between. At sunset, each water stripe will reflect flame against dark sand.

If you witness a glass-still surface, make the most of it. Use a middle horizon, placing the trees or bushes on the far shore above the centerline and the mirror image below it for an otherworldly effect. If the sky is a cold and featureless gray, hide it with a hanging branch. After a rain, shoot reflections in puddles to give a puzzling upside-down reality. Leave out the real subject.

Reflections are magic images.

***Text and Images © Libby Collins Photography
From Her Book "The Elegant Earth"***

PHOTOGRAPHY DIVISION GUIDELINES

SEPTEMBER 2012

Please read and follow the GCA flower show rules that apply to the Photography Division: Note that listing plant material is encouraged, but not required, due to the difficulty of identifying plants in some photos, e.g., foreign landscapes and heavily forested areas.

Schedule

Classes in photography consist of three classifications: Color, Monochrome and Creative Techniques. These classes are to be judged separately. Creative Techniques is defined as obviously manipulated for effect, often nontraditional or nonrealistic. (A small copy, e.g., 4"x6", of the original, to be included for educational purposes in a Creative Techniques class, may be required by the schedule.) Creative Techniques may be divided into classes specifying monochrome or color.

Staging information (including background color) is to be included in the schedule. Photographs should be staged as close to eye level as possible (50 to 60 inches from the floor), with good uniform lighting; plan for at least four feet of space in front of the photographs for the judges and viewing public.

The schedule must state the date by which an entry must be received (usually one month before the show). Please note in the photography schedule there is both a registration form and an entry form.

Registration

Registration forms indicating an entrant's preference must be submitted to the Entries or Division Chairman. The schedule and the registration form must state how many entries an individual may make. An exhibitor is permitted one entry per class, but may enter more than one class if the schedule so indicates.

Entry times may be staggered to allow for club entries, then

zone entries, then open dates for all members of GCA. Exhibitors will be notified whether or not their entry has been accepted. If forced to withdraw, the entrant must provide a substitute unless there is a waiting list. Entry forms should include the address and a phone number of the Entries Chairman for shipping purposes.

Entry

Entry forms contain the entrant's information: name, address, phone number, club, zone, a title or optional brief statement and an optional (but encouraged) list of plant material, indication of novice standing and notice of inclusion of prepaid shipping materials for return of photograph. Completed entry forms are to be affixed to the back of the mount. They are to be returned with the package after judging, including entry card, comment and ribbon, if awarded. Upon notification of acceptance, the entrant must deliver the entry by the stated deadline (either by hand delivery, U.S. Mail or UPS/FedEx, depending on the schedule requirements.) Acknowledgement of the entry's arrival will be promptly sent to the entrant by email or U.S. Mail.

Photographs, which have won a first or any special award in a GCA or Major Flower Show, may not be entered in competition again. A photograph that was previously entered and did not place first may be entered again, but only if it is significantly altered and newly printed. A photograph may be entered in only one show at a time.

Photographs

Each photograph must be the work of the exhibitor under whose name it is registered. Any manipulation at any stage must also be the work of the exhibitor. This includes enhancement for color or clarity, removal of part of the image, combining images or distorting the original subject. Only mounting, matting and printing may be done professionally.

Entries are limited to subjects consistent with the GCA interests, including horticulture, flower arrangement, gardens/landscapes, conservation, the environment and the natural world.

All entries must be mounted or backed. Class guidelines include size and overmatting requirements, if any. Size is determined by overall dimension, e.g., 50" maximum perimeter. Overall dimension is preferred rather than a specific size (11"x14"). The size limit includes an overmat, if specified. If the photo is to be mounted without an overmat, the perimeter of the photograph is the measurement used (flush mount). The matting color and finish of the photograph are the choice of the exhibitor unless specified in the schedule. Framing and glass are not allowed.

Passers

Passing in photography is for conformance to the physical requirements of the class and schedule (size and matting) and specifics of the class (color, monochrome or creative techniques, or landscape, close-up, etc.) but not for interpretation of the subject matter, which is subjective. Passing may be done by non-judges. The entrant will be notified in time to resubmit or explain her entry to the Passing Chairman. The Passing Chairman should not be entered in the Photography division of the show.

Judges

The Photography Committee may reclassify an entry only with the permission of the exhibitor. The judges, with approval of the Photography Committee, may subdivide a class. Judging results are to be announced promptly after the show to all entrants by email, telephone or U.S. Mail.

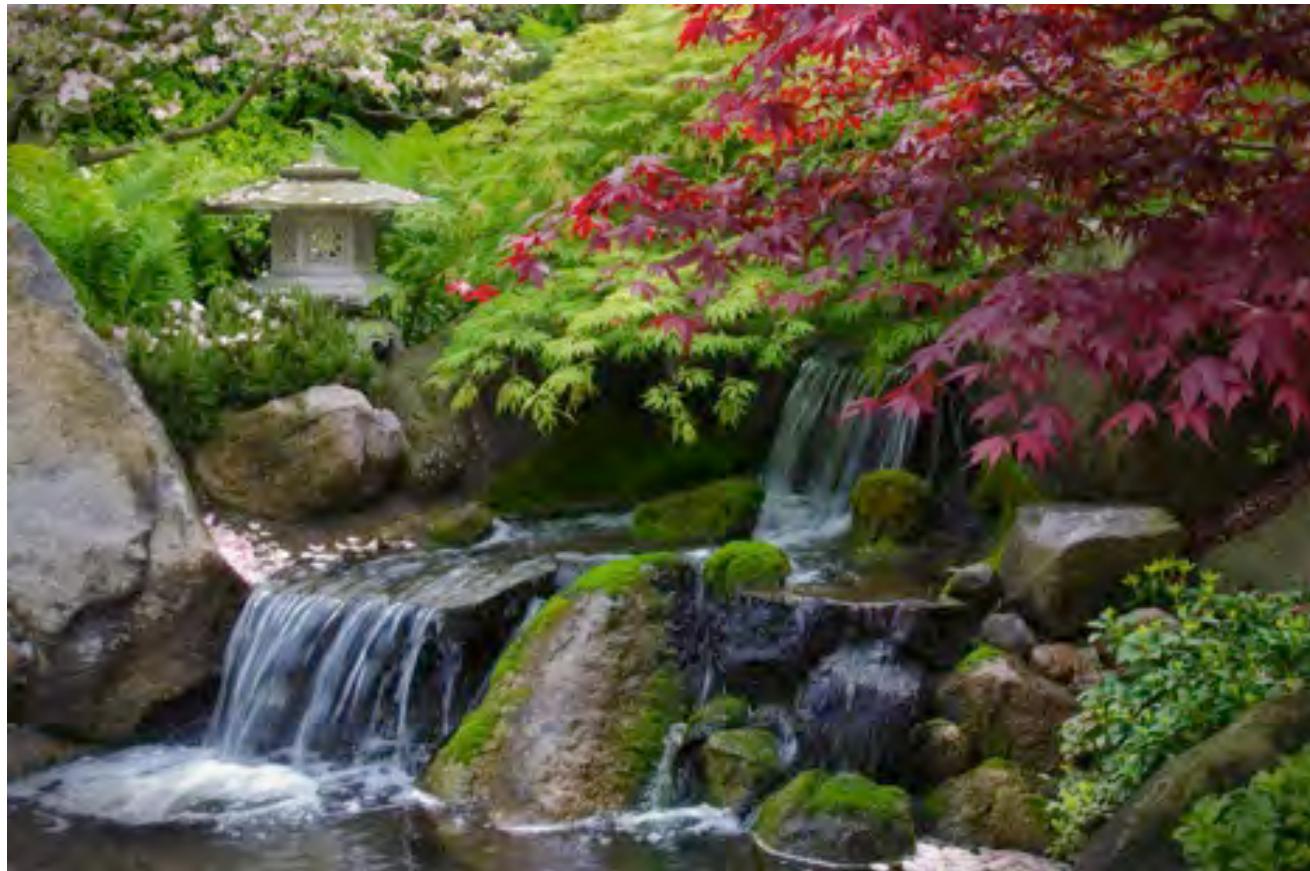
For a Major Flower Show, three approved judges are required; for GCA and Zone Meeting Flower Shows, two approved judges

and one prospective are sufficient. In the event of absolute necessity, a knowledgeable individual or professional photographer may be invited to fill the third spot. That individual should not dominate the panel and should be instructed to act as an equal member of the panel. A total of eighteen images is ideal for each panel, but circumstances may require more if sufficient time is allowed. Special Awards panels for photography may be made up from the panel(s) of photography judges at the show. Accredited judges and experienced prospectives may comprise this panel.



Jo Anne Rosen
Seattle Garden Club

"Echoes of Rainbows"
The GC of Honolulu
First in class



LAURA SIMPSON

Lake Geneva GC

On Parade: Celebrating Public
Gardens

June 2012

The Little Garden Club of Columbus
Columbus OH

First and Best in Show

“Artful Designs in Nature”—an image
of a landscape in a public park or
garden

“Beautiful image, both artistically and technically. Breathtaking serenity.”

Photo taken at Anderson Japanese Gardens, Rockford IL



ANNE SUMAN
River Oaks GC

Birds, Bees, Buds on the Bayou
May 2012
River Oaks GC
Bayou Bend Gardens, Houston TX

Third place and
Photography Creativity Award
“Budding Beauties”—novice

Tulipa tulip
Rosa rose

“Color and contrast give movement and texture. Contrasting shapes create two different images.”



MARY TURNER

Seattle GC

Modern Dialect

April 2012

Memphis GC

Memphis TN

First and Best In Show

“Toward Abstraction”— Color photograph of a plant or flower using creative techniques

“Shall We Dance”—Calla lily

“Triple Perfection. Drama at its Best”

Triple exposure within the camera, enhanced using filters in Photoshop



“Cosmic Flirtation”

Nikon D7000 with Nikon 60mm macro lens
ISO 1000, 1/800 sec, f/8.0
Photoshop Lightroom and Nik Silver Efex Pro 2

JEAN MATTHEWS

GC of Palm Beach

Her Story Our Story 1912-2012
May 2012
Green Spring Valley GC
Baltimore MD

First and Best in Show
“A Portrait”—monochrome

“Stunning image. Perfection in every way.”

Holmskioldia sanguinea Chinese



“Solid”—color

“Fluid in its solidity”

“Icicle Curtain—After one of the enormous blizzards of 2011, I stood behind a giant icicle coming off a roof and shot the trees/sky through it ”

CHARLOTTE JEHLE

Sasqua GC

Splish Splash

May 2012

Sasqua Garden Club

Westport CT

Second Place and
Photography Creativity Award



This image was taken with natural daylight coming from a window on the right side. Since the dominant feature was the texture in the dying petals, I decided to amplify that by using a texture overlay in Photoshop. This involved pasting a second photo on top of the first and combining them using a blend mode. The second photo was a picture of thick, pastel-colored oil paint brushstrokes on canvas. The images were combined using the multiply blend mode at 53% opacity. Finally, the saturation, contrast, and sharpening were increased in the center of the flower to draw the viewer's eye.

LAURA SIMPSON

Lake Geneva GC

Unlocking the Witte

May 2012

Alamo Heights-Terrell Hills GC
San Antonio TX

First and Best in Show

“See the Light”— close-up color photograph of a flower

If we could see the miracle of a single flower clearly, our whole life would change. -Buddha

“Buddha’s robes represented well through subtle lighting and texture. Exquisite.”



JANIS L. MURPHY
Southampton GC

Reflections on Artistic Legends
June 2012
Southampton GC
Southampton Cultural Center,
Southampton NY

First and Best in Show

Papaver poppy

“Luminescent, effective vignette.”

“My entry was inspired by Claude Monet – ‘The Poppy Field 1873’.”



Garden Club of America

JAN GEORGE

The Garden Club of Honolulu

Pacific Horizons: Echoes of Rainbows

May 2012

The Garden Club of Honolulu
Honolulu Museum of Art

First and Best in Show

"Illusions"—a landscape viewed through an arch—color

"Painterly multi-layered illusions create visual interest."

"Private Property"—North shore of Oahu

"Watching the tropical forest encroach on this abandoned building over many years, I wanted to convey the illusion of permanence ... that what we build is lasting."

Photo taken with Canon Powershot G9



MARY TURNER

Seattle GC

Salsa! A Celebration of Latin
Cultures
June 2012
The Newport Flower Show
Newport RI

First, Best In Show, and Judges'
Award for Interpretation

"Carnaval" – A manipulated
photograph

Rosa 'Just Joey'

"Exudes Carnaval. Well executed."

"Red Hot Carnival Nights"
"I tried to convey the sound of
music playing throughout the red
hot carnival nights."

A photo of a Just Joey rose was
layered with a photo of Christmas
lights taken at night and panned in
the camera.



MARGARET M. PORTER

Red Mountain GC

Modern Dialect

April 2012

Memphis Garden Club

Memphis TN

Third and Photography Curator's
Award 2012 show

"The Struggle"—color

"Highly creative choice of subject."

"Life Cycle—Patagonia—The sheep eat the plants and create a barren landscape, but it is the plant that struggles through adversity, regenerates itself, and ultimately survives longer than the sheep."

THE SCALE OF POINTS – AND WHY IT HAS CHANGED

by Sandy Dawson. Green Tree Garden Club

Just when you thought you knew the Scale of Points, it's changed. The change is not a big one, but the Photography Committee is hoping that it will make a difference in the process of judging photographs. Moving a few points from one area to increase another will help to put more weight on areas that were being overlooked or may be considered less important. All categories under the Scale of Points are important and should be considered during judging.

The points for judging creativity have been changed from 30 to 25. This doesn't lessen the impact of creativity. We all know that creativity is the quality of artistic interpretation, imagination, emotion and feeling that draws a viewer into a photograph. Removing five points from this area enabled the Committee to adjust another area.

Interpretation of Theme (Conformance to Schedule) is an area the Committee decided was not given enough attention during the entering process and also during judging. The points here have been changed from 10 to 20. We sometimes come across a photograph that judges think does not fit the class. Once it has been passed, however, we must do our best to judge it. By having the points in this area increased to 20, we hope more attention will be put on interpretation by the judges. We also hope that the entrants will consider this more closely when choosing a class to enter, keeping in mind adherence to schedule, the class parameters and the theme of the schedule. The photograph should accurately represent the class in which it has been entered.

The points for Distinction have been dropped to 10 from 15. Distinction is still important! Distinction is there, or not. It is usually pretty obvious. We judges sometimes refer to it as the



Marion Bottomley
Carmel-by-the-Sea GC

"Echoes of Rainbows"
The GC of Honolulu
First in class

The Honolulu schedule sent me to several California missions looking for arches with no great results. Finally settled on picturesque Stanford University mission architecture at 5 am when hardly a student was around.

"Wow" factor. Distinction is superior in all aspects of the Scale of Points. It is a photograph that is beyond the ordinary.

Composition (25 points) and Technical Merit (20 points) have remained the same.

The new Scale of Points reads:

Creativity	25
Composition	25
Technical Merit	20
Distinction	10
Interpretation of Theme	20
	100

If you are a judge, please make a note of the new scale of points. This information is now in the digital version of the [Yellow Book](#) on the GCA website.

WISH YOU WERE THERE: NOTES FROM A WORKSHOP

by Gay Estes

I take every opportunity to take photography courses, and our club photography representative Cindy Fitch invited Libbie Masterson of the Photography Guild of Houston to speak to both Houston GCA clubs. I took notes and wish to share them with you.

My biggest surprise was that Libbie highly praised Costco as a source for printing pictures. I took some 30-year-old slides to check them out—prints cost 27 cents apiece. I am thrilled with the result! I had paid more for inferior results.

She stated the basics—use the lowest ISO you can and get a tripod. I was surprised that she told us to remove the stabilizing feature when you do use a tripod.

For those who are challenged with fractions, she liked using the A (or aperture) setting most of the time to get a shallow depth of field. TV (setting on some cameras) for sports action and P (program) for landscape shots.

Her camera has a setting for shooting in Tiff format or Raw. Mine does not have a Tiff setting, but I shoot in JPEG and Raw. JPEG is condensed and loses pixels every time it is re-opened, then edited and saved again. The larger files of Raw make a lot of sense, but whatever format you use, it is important to take the right shot in the first place! She suggests that you shoot a wider shot and crop later. Again—good common sense.

Continuous shooting was another revelation—the third picture taken in a sequence will be sharper, as the camera

has settled down, lessening the effect of the photographer's movement in clicking the shutter. Timer release was another method of getting the best shot. All these are on the camera body and are not added.

Libbie prefers Photoshop for post-production and uses Bridge to file her photographs. There were some amazing photographs of famous contemporary photographers and what they can accomplish using Layers. [Kelby Training](#) is a good online source of tutoring—you can visit the site anytime. [Lynda.com](#) is also good or just browse in Google or YouTube. There is lots of free information, although Kelby and Lynda charge a nominal amount. Focus—your best source—is free!

