



ISLAND FLOWER

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**Island Flower Growers Co-operative**  
**An Introduction to Better Photos**  
July 2021

**From Adria (Little Bee Blooms):**

This document is intended to help you create the photo bank you need to sell flowers with the Co-op. We'll provide feedback along the way to help you become fully responsible for this important work. We hope that, together, we can soon reach a point where all photos in the shop meet our shared standards (see below for some examples of what meets—and doesn't meet—our standards).

Great quality photos of your product are essential to selling. It's not an option—it's an absolute must. Our clients are visual people, and they need to see what they are buying. We aim to create quality, simple photos, and I'm here to tell you it's easier than you think. However, it takes time! Gone are the days of taking snapshots in the field or in your cooler.

First, find a dedicated space to photograph all the flowers you intend to sell.

**What you need:**

- Good light. Natural, indirect light is best. This means a north facing window or wall. No direct sun on your product. If you absolutely must photograph in the field, wait until Golden Hour (shortly after sunrise, shortly before sunset) when light is indirect and soft.
- A plain, simple backdrop. To the right you'll see that my backdrop is an old, dark curtain above my wooden table top. The window is northeast facing and doesn't get direct sunlight. It's in my garage studio. I leave this set up so I can quickly take pictures without having to re-set every time. For me, this efficiency is key.
- Other possibilities we use include a box with a neutral-coloured tissue paper taped on; a solid-coloured cushion big enough to fit the length of your stems.



Here are a couple pictures of me in action. Get down at the angle you need to have the natural light on your blooms. I sometimes hold my flowers, and I sometimes use a vase. But my hand is never in the shot.





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**Other keys to taking usable photos:**

- Learn to properly expose your photos. This can be done with a smartphone or actual camera. You must expose for the bloom (not the backdrop). Google how to change the exposure in your phone.
- It's best in most cases to take a picture of several flowers, either three or the number in the bunch you'll be selling. A single flower looks lonely and sad. Exceptions to this rule could be large dahlias or some roses.
- The picture should be of your blooms, not your background. So get closer and learn how to crop out extra background space. You're not selling your background, and even the most attractive distressed barn wood will compete with the flowers.
- Get a post-processing app. I use Photoshop on my phone. It's simple. If I use my proper camera, I use Photoshop on my computer. It's *not* simple. Lorna uses Picmonkey (there's a free version or an affordable premium version) on her computer. You need these to crop, sharpen and make colour adjustments so that the colour is as close as possible to the actual bloom colour, and focus is immaculate.



**Here's the end result. Beautiful flowers, plain backdrops. Exposed for the flowers not the backdrop. Tight crop around the flowers. Perfect focus. Colour corrected if necessary.**



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Contrast the above photos with the one on the right: a full sun, field shot. It's a horrible picture: direct sunlight, too much background, one small flower in the middle, colours all wrong. I don't want to buy this flower. But I do want to buy the flowers in the pictures above. And yet they are the exact same flowers.

Folks, we are all guilty of these horrible pictures as we're rushing to capture the stage of development and meet our deadlines. Myself included. But they just don't cut it. Take the time to take pictures of your product properly to represent your farm and the Co-op as the professional growers that we are. And sell flowers!

- Adria



***A few more tips from Lorna (Ninebark Farm):***

- You don't need to be an expert to succeed. I have no background in photography other than a cheap online course. I use a 10-year-old Canon point-and-shoot with a zoom lens that I can adjust for manual settings to control light and depth of field. Growers/designers we know have hired photographers for a few hours to teach them the basics.
- Our photos don't all have to look the same. We're not asking you to conform, just to help us meet a professional standard that shows clients an accurate representation of the stems they're buying and highlights the beauty that's important to them, in focus.
- Adria and I keep our set-ups handy because we're always ready to capture our product. That might be on a Thursday when you're harvesting for weekend bouquets, or when the first stems of a new crop are ready to harvest. Even if you're not going to post them in the shop that week, take the time to photograph them at their best. I harvest the first few stems always for photos, even if it means I don't sell those stems.
- Depending on the flower, I often photograph from above. Umbellifers and zinnias don't work well from above, so I'll kneel down the way Adria does, and get a close-up from the front of the bunch. But spikes arranged in a tight fan, or foliage in a good bunch with pleasing arching stems can look great. I spend extra time cropping these, and sometimes rotate the image for the best look. I take multiple images. I learn something every time. But don't try and rush the process. (I can't hold them because I need both hands for the camera, a real disadvantage.)
- If the stage of harvest, or degree of openness changes week-to-week, be sure to post a new photo, even though it's a pain. Ideally, for something like apple mint, I'll do 3 different photos over the season: one for the bright green 12-inch stems; another for the more grey/green and fuzzy mid-season tall stems; another when it's in bloom.
- Expanding on Adria's suggestion of photographing 3 stems or 1 bunch, sometimes I'll show a few bunches together, and try to make sure it's clear--the elastics show, or something--that there's more than one bunch shown. Or I can say so in the product description. If the stems are from a mix, I try to show all colours.
- If I notice that different stems look great together, I try to take a "sexy" shot of them mingling, so I have something to post in my IG stories a few hours before market opening and tag @islandflowergrowers.
- When considering exposure, some blooms just look better with brighter exposure, while others benefit from moody and dark. Don't be afraid to go either way, as long as it's still true to the colour and focus of the flowers. Matricaria, for example, just looked weird when I tried to make it moody and dark. Either way, I try to give all my photos the same, general "look".



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- We talked a lot about stage of harvest and photos in the spring, especially with tulips and ranunculus. I tried to show a bunch of tulips in coloured bud -- how I'd be selling them -- and included a stem fully open to show its eventual beauty. I did this with ranunculus, too, showing the marshmallow stage buds bunch with a clipped fully open bloom beside it.

Here's one of my 2 set-ups, that's my cat. I like this doorway on spring mornings because the light is soft, indirect but sharp. And I like the colour of the cushion for tulips, narcissus and those frits.



This is my other set-up, like Adria's, right in my messy studio, near the cooler, north facing doorway. A box with tissue paper on it.

