OUTDOOR
PHOTOGRAPHY GUIDE

12-DAY BACKYARD PHOTOGRAPHY CHALLENGE

DAY 1 - SHOOT AT MIDDAY

When you shoot the edges of the day, meaning during sunrise and sunset hours, you have the ability to shoot beautiful, soft light that usually yields some pretty impressive photos. But, what about mid-day hours? You can still shoot during the middle of the day too. For example, cloudy skies allow you to shoot water features all day long. Clear blue skies can pair really well with wildflowers in bloom. Outdoor adventures can take place under the brightest of skies. So, in today's challenge, give yourself permission to sleep in and eat dinner at a normal hour. Only shoot during the middle of the day.

DAY 2 - NATURAL PATTERNS

Patterns are a big part of shooting compelling and creative compositions in outdoor photography. The best part about including patterns into your outdoor photography is that you can literally photograph them at any point in the year and at any point of the day. Patterns can also be enormous subjects like grand landscapes of mountains or tiny macro details of the outdoors. The number one thing to remember when photographing patterns is that you need to look for consistency. One shape does not equal a pattern. Consistent and recurring shapes do create patterns. When you get outside, develop your creative eye to watch for patterns in nature. Just remember that when you're working on a composition, think of shape repetitions!

DAY 3 - SUBJECT IN FOREGROUND
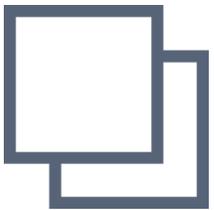
Although you don't need to include a foreground in every photograph you make, you will find that foregrounds add considerable depth and punch to your compositions. When you use a foreground, it helps establish a visual relationship between the bottom of the photograph and the top, which is important for leading the viewer's eye into the scene. In today's challenge, you're going to explore the artistic use of foregrounds in your photographs. Try using a wide-angle to create a composition that juxtaposes foreground and background, so you can get really close to a foreground element and exaggerate its importance relative to the background.

DAY 4 - TELL A STORY

Whenever you go out to shoot outdoor photography, there is always a story and an adventure that is behind the images you capture. To tell better stories with photography, and create context within that story, try taking more photos of your adventures to and from the locations you shoot. Adventure photography can be just as a creative process as the destination photos themselves. They can be anything from an adventurous, rugged vehicle, a hiker crossing your frame, or simply someone lounging in a hammock or tent. Next time you go shoot, include some story elements into your photo portfolios to make your viewers want to get outside. Tell the stories behind the photos you shoot and the work that went into capturing the incredible compositions.

Use **#OPGbackyardchallege** when sharing your photo on social media!

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DAY 5 - BACKLIGHT EFFECT

Backlighting occurs when you point your camera directly toward a source of light, whether it's the sun, a street lamp, or a relatively bright portion of the scene. This effect causes the subject to be lit from behind, making its fringes seem to glow from within. When used properly, backlighting can help you create dramatic and mysterious photos. Anything translucent, such as leaves or hair, will appear to glow from within when backlit. Subjects surrounded by fog, steam, dust, sea spray, and even falling snow can look magical in backlighting. For today's challenge you're going to explore the artistic use of backlighting in your photographs.

DAY 6 - SIMPLE SUBJECT

When you think about outdoor photography, an image shot with a wide-angle lens that includes a large foreground element might come to mind. It's important not to forget that telephoto lenses can also be a strong lens to create compelling outdoor photos of nature. Using a telephoto lens to seclude subjects either by placing them against negative spaces, solid colors, or even using a wide aperture can make simple subjects in a scene stand out and give a location context.

DAY 7 - SHOOT AT NIGHT

Night photography offers a virtual "blank canvas" and a chance to make unique images. During twilight, long exposures allow the photographer to "paint" across the image frame using moving elements such as clouds or waves. Other artificial light sources may be useful for "light painting," such as a flashlight, lantern, tea candles, or spotlight. For long exposures, you need a remote electronic shutter cable with a locking mechanism; use your camera's Bulb setting for exposures longer than 30 seconds, and turn on your camera's long exposure noise reduction feature (although this will double your exposure time). In order to let as much light as possible into the camera, use the widest aperture you can without sacrificing depth of field.

DAY 8 - NATURAL DESIGNS

Natural designs can be a difficult genre of photography to shoot. They are both real and abstract in the sense that you're shooting physical subjects, but doing so in a way that reveals abstract designs that already exist in nature. Natural designs can be photographed using wide angle lenses, telephoto lenses, and macro lenses. When you're starting out shooting natural designs, look for clustered shapes in nature that create patterns and contrasting tones. If there's anything I've learned, this is a technique that doesn't come easy to everyone and may take some practice. Be sure to watch the ground as you're looking for designs. You may be surprised at what you see under your feet.

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DAY 9 - SHOOT THROUGH

Everyone knows you should get a clear view of your subject when making a photograph, right? Well, sometimes the clearest view isn't always the best view. Instead, try "shooting through" objects to frame your shot and get a stronger composition. This can be a fun technique to work with – you might find yourself in some interesting positions like lying on the ground or climbing trees to get the perfect shot. Anything you can do to get that ideal composition!

DAY 10 - BLACK AND WHITE
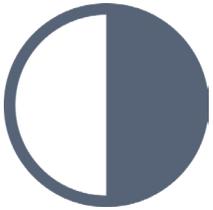
You can achieve black and white photos either through camera settings, or computer programs. Whether you should make such a conversion depends quite a bit on lighting. If the sun is out and bright, you'll lose a lot of visual warmth and depth by converting an image to black and white. But if the sun is covered by clouds and the lighting is what photographers often call "limp light," you may end up with a cooler image that will lend itself well to black and white. Creating a black and white photo makes your contrast grow sharper, making your photo look richer.

DAY 11 - BOKEH EFFECT
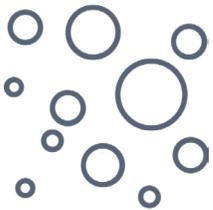
What is bokeh? Technically the word "bokeh" refers to the quality of the blur of out-of-focus parts of a photograph produced by a lens. But most photographers these days seem to use the term to refer to the blur itself. So who am I to deviate from the prevailing evolution of photography terminology? The bokeh effect is most pronounced when you use points of light for your out-of-focus subjects. These bright highlights can be city lights at night, specular highlights on sunlit waves, or even sunlit leaves in a forest.

DAY 12 - CLOSE UP

Close up photography takes creative concentration because it includes careful preparation to capture the intricate details of your subject. In close up photography, the camera requires precise positioning because it has to align with your subject. Therefore, tripod positioning is critical. You'll also want to check the camera's histogram to measure the lighting and the color balance. There are times when will you want to shoot various exposures using different white balance settings to achieve the most accurate colors. For maximum sharpness, the goal is to align your camera lens on the same visual plane as what you are shooting.

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MY NOTES

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