



FOCUS

A publication of the GCA Photography Committee | Fall 2024 | Volume 66

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By the 2023-2024 GCA Photography Committee

Cover Photograph: *Fading Beauty*, by Ray Chilton (1940-2024), River Oaks GC, Zone IX, Class *Abstraction*, GCA Photography Creativity Award, A Master Class: Art and Flowers, a GCA Flower Show presented by Laurel GC, Zone IX. November 2013.



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From the GCA Photography Chair

Fall is a time of reflection and giving thanks. I am so grateful to former photography committee chair, Susan Van Tassel, her committee, and its numerous subcommittees for their work over the past two years. They made significant revisions to the *Yellow Book*, updated the flower show template, amended *Book 5*'s glossary of terms, and re-styled the **photography landing page**.

Our focus this year will be to Connect/Collaborate/Inspire. When the zone representatives reach out to your club, please let them know your needs. They are there to help inspire with ideas for speakers, workshops, field trips, etc. We wish to encourage members to grow and expand their photography skills and enter more shows.

This issue of *Focus* highlights many images from the past that will inspire you to pick up your camera and try something new.

— Karen McCormick
Photography Committee Chair
Magnolia GC, Zone IX



Photograph by Joe Duty

Mission Statement

Focus magazine's mission is to inspire and educate readers about the art and science of photography.

Focus magazine is published online three times a year: September, January, and May. Email article suggestions to focus@gcamerica.org.

To submit a photograph for publication consideration in *Focus*, use this link: **Photograph Submission Form**. Please be sure to review eligibility guidelines set forth on the submission form and the **GCA's communications policies** before submitting photographs. By submitting your work to *Focus*, you grant the GCA permission to publish your work in all public and internal outlets.

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Letter from the Editor



By Libba Wilkes, The GC of Jackson, Zone IX, Class 2: *In the Dark*, monochrome, GCA Novice Award in Photography, *It's in the Stars*, a GCA Flower Show presented by the GC of Englewood, Zone IV. October 12–13, 2018.

As a GCA photographer, I, like many of you, stand on the shoulders of giants.

This issue pays homage to our founding photographers and to those who followed closely in their footsteps. Most of the photographs reach back many years, although a few are more recent gems by some veteran photographers. This is the first of a two-part retrospective of the best of GCA photography. (If your favorite is

missing, sit tight. It may be in a future issue...)

I am grateful to the earliest *Focus* pioneers for their vision and leadership. I am also grateful to the dozens of my GCA photography friends who answered my emails, texts, and calls this summer and helped search and identify many of the photographs contained in this issue.

With this special retrospective, it is only fitting that this issue's cover is graced by a photograph, *Fading Beauty*, by the late Ray Chilton (1940–2024), River Oaks GC, Zone IX. Ray was one of my earliest inspirations, and I will miss seeing her brilliant imagery in shows and in the pages of this gorgeous magazine. My only regret is that I never told Ray what she meant to me. Perhaps she knows now.

On your GCA photography journey, be sure to pay homage to those who inspire you. Send them a note, an email, or even just a text—before too much time passes.

Enjoy this issue, which overflows with great GCA photography through the years.

—L. Anna Forbes, *Focus* Editor,
Kanawha Garden Club, Zone VII

P.S. To Susan Van Tassel, your vision and dynamic leadership as committee chair was matched only by your uncommon kindness. To dear Mary Haggerty, my tireless, talented, trusted assistant editor, thank you for being my right hand. I miss you both.

Inspiration:

Winning Photographs from Early-to-Mid 2024 Flower Shows



By Charlee Reed, The Seattle GC, Zone XII, Class 5: *Surprise, color splash*, First and Best in Show, *Beyond the Green*, a GCA Annual Meeting Flower Show presented by Zone II. April 26–28, 2024.

Focus showcases selected winning photographs from GCA flower shows that exhibitors have submitted for publication consideration through the **Photograph Submission Form**. Visit the **Focus Gallery** on the GCA website for more winning photographs, along with judges' comments and other show details.

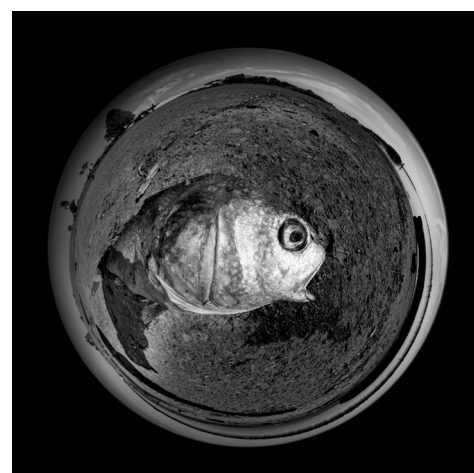
By Jean Matthews, The GC of Palm Beach, Zone VIII, Class 4: *Explore, creative techniques*, Second and GCA Photography Creativity Award, *Beyond the Green*, a GCA Annual Meeting Flower Show presented by Zone II. April 26–28, 2024.





By Linda Sedgewick,
The GC of Princeton,
Zone IV, Class: *Shafts
of Light*, First and Best
in Show, *Narratives
of Light*, a GCA Club
Show presented by
The GC of Princeton,
Zone IV. April 7, 2024.

By Kate Fahey, Four Counties GC, Zone V, Class
4: *Eggspectation*, still life, Third Place, *In Fine
Feather*, a GCA Flower Show presented by
The GC of Allegheny County, Zone V. May
15-16, 2024.

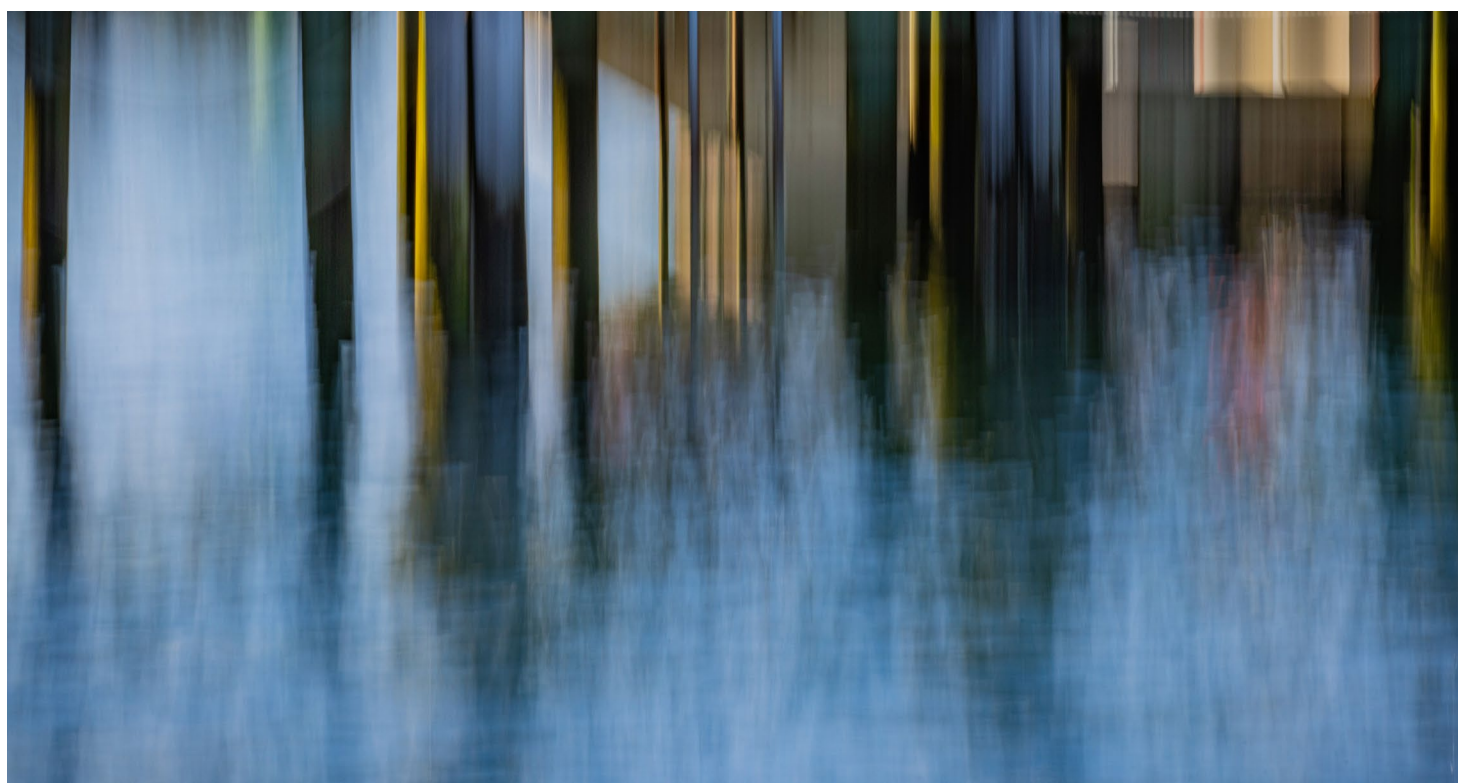


By Stephanie Young, Paducah
GC, Zone VII, Class 6: *Fisheye*,
monochrome/fisheye lens,
Second and GCA Photography
Creativity Award, *Rhythm &
Hues*, a GCA Major Flower Show
presented by Memphis GC and
Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Zone
IX. April 12-14, 2024.

By L. Anna Forbes,
Kanawha GC, Zone VII,
Class 5: *Floating Feather*,
First and Certificate of
Excellence in Photography,
Rhythm & Hues, a GCA
Major Flower Show
presented by Memphis
GC and Dixon Gallery and
Gardens, Zone IX. April
12-14, 2024.

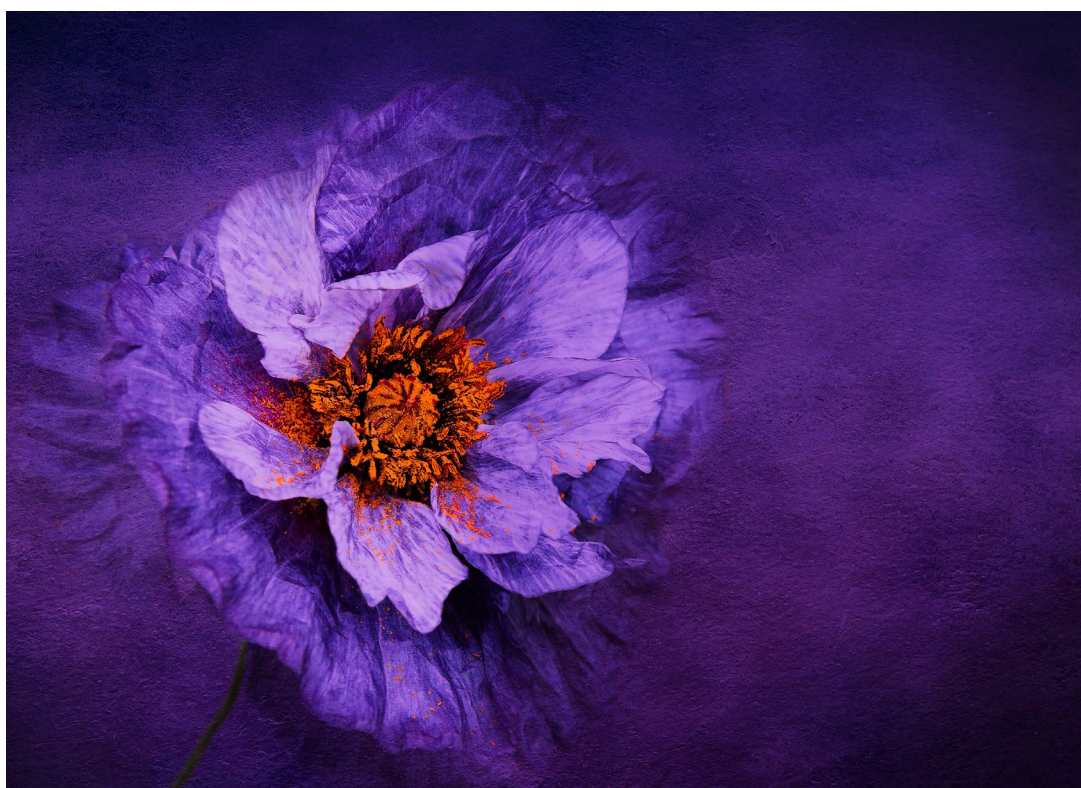


By Jean Jarvis, Piedmont
GC, Zone XII, Class 4:
River of Dreams, creative
techniques, First and Best
in Show, *Rhythm & Hues*,
a GCA Major Flower Show
presented by Memphis
GC and Dixon Gallery and
Gardens, Zone IX. April
12-14, 2024.



By Pat Fulmer, The Village GC of Sewickley,
Zone V, Class 2: *Birds of a Feather*,
monochrome, First and Best in Show,
In Fine Feather, a GCA Flower Show
presented by the GC of Allegheny County,
Zone V. May 15–16, 2024.

By Kathryn Painter,
Memphis GC, Zone
IX, Class 6: *Fisheye*,
monochrome/fisheye
lens, First and GCA
Novice Award in
Photography, *Rhythm
& Hues*, a GCA Major
Flower Show presented
by Memphis GC and
Dixon Gallery and
Gardens, Zone IX. April
12–14, 2024.



By Evelyn Lorentzen-Bell,
Green Fingers GC, Zone II,
Class 4: *Unexpected View*,
First Place and Best in Show,
Unexpected Beauty, a GCA
Flower Show presented by
Greenwich GC, Zone II. June
14–15, 2024.

Through the Years:

A GCA Photography Retrospective (Part One)

By the *Focus*
Editorial Staff

We, GCA photographers, stand on the shoulders of giants. We owe a debt to the GCA members who were early champions of photography as a GCA discipline. A special nod to Corliss Knapp Engle (1936–2009) whose vision and tenacity led to the formation of the Photography Committee in the mid-2000s.

This retrospective of GCA photography over the past 15 years pays homage to our “founding” photographers, and also to those who followed in their footsteps. Some photographs featured here may be familiar best-in-show and blue-ribbon winners. But others have never won a top award or were never published in *Focus*. A couple have not even been entered in a GCA flower show or contest. The common thread is that all the photography featured here is first-class work by GCA club members that has been carefully culled from past publications and personal archives and is now neatly packaged here in one spot. (More to come in the Winter 2025 issue.) Enjoy.

By Pat Lazor, GC of Morristown, Zone IV, First and Best in Show, *Highlands Lowlands*, a GCA Zone IV Flower Show presented by the GC of Englewood, Zone IV. June 17–18, 2014. **Educational Note:** Pat Lazor was the first GCA photography chair from 2006–2008.





By Libby Kendall, The GC of Jackson, Zone IX, Class 3: *Rear View Mirror*, First Place and Certificate of Excellence in Photography, *Art en Fleurs 2019*, *Petal to the Metal*, a GCA Major Flower Show presented by Green Tree GC, Kettle Moraine GC, Lake Geneva GC, and Town and Country GC, Zone XI. Date October 1-2, 2019.



By Penelope Ross, Fairfield GC, Zone III, Class: *Time and Tide*, First and Best in Show, *It's About Time*, a GCA Flower Show presented by the GC of East Hampton, Zone III. July 24, 2014. **Educational Note:** Penelope Ross served as the Assistant Editor of *Focus* from 2011-2016 and Editor of *Focus* from 2016-2017.

By Phyllis Reynolds, The Portland GC, Zone XII. Details unknown. Many thanks to Ann Waldman for her help in finding this hidden gem.



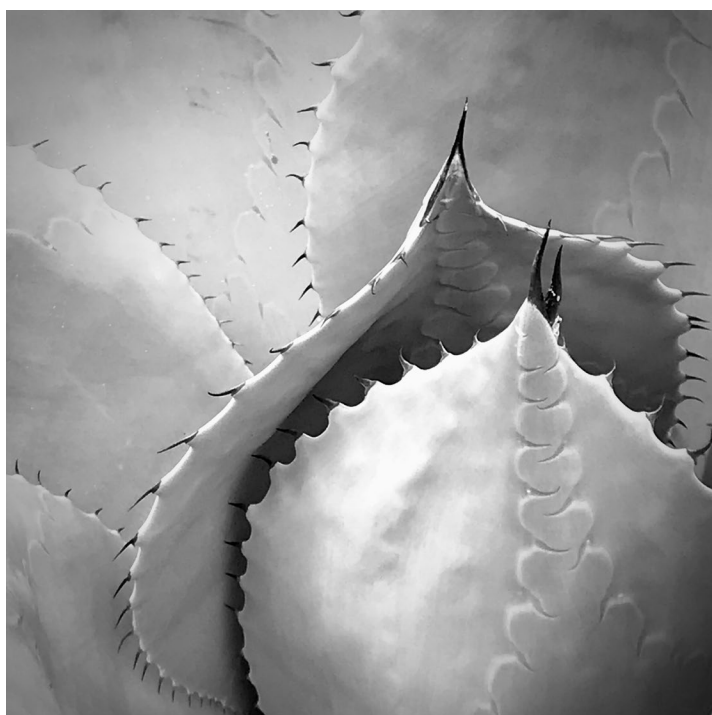


By Gay Estes, The GC of Houston, Zone IX, Class 1: *In the Manner of a Favorite Artist*, Honorable Mention, *People's Choice* online *Focus* contest, Fall 2011.
Educational Note: Gay Estes served as Editor of *Focus* from 2009-2010 and GCA photography chair from 2009-2013.

By Laura Simpson, Lake Geneva GC,
Zone XI, Class: *Still Experimenting*,
First and Best in Show, *GLORIOSA*
Trustee's Garden, a GCA Flower Show
presented by Trustees' GC, Zone VIII.
March 14–16, 2024.



By Neel Parikh, Tacoma GC, Zone XII, Class
Some Like It Hot, close-up, black and white,
First Place, *Habitat: Nature's Masterpiece*,
Sanctioned Non-GCA Major Flower Show
presented by the Philadelphia Horticultural
Society. June 5–13, 2021.



By Marion Bottomley, Carmel-by-the-Sea GC, Zone XII, Class: *Shared Bounty*, First and Phyllis Reynolds Photography Award, *Inspirations*, a GCA Major Flower Show presented by The Portland GC, Zone XII. May 16–18, 2014.



By Vicki Saltonstall, Chestnut Hill GC, Zone I, Class: *Spring Awakening*, GCA Photography Creativity Award, *Garden to Palette*, a GCA Flower Show presented by the GC of Dublin, Zone I. September 16, 2014.

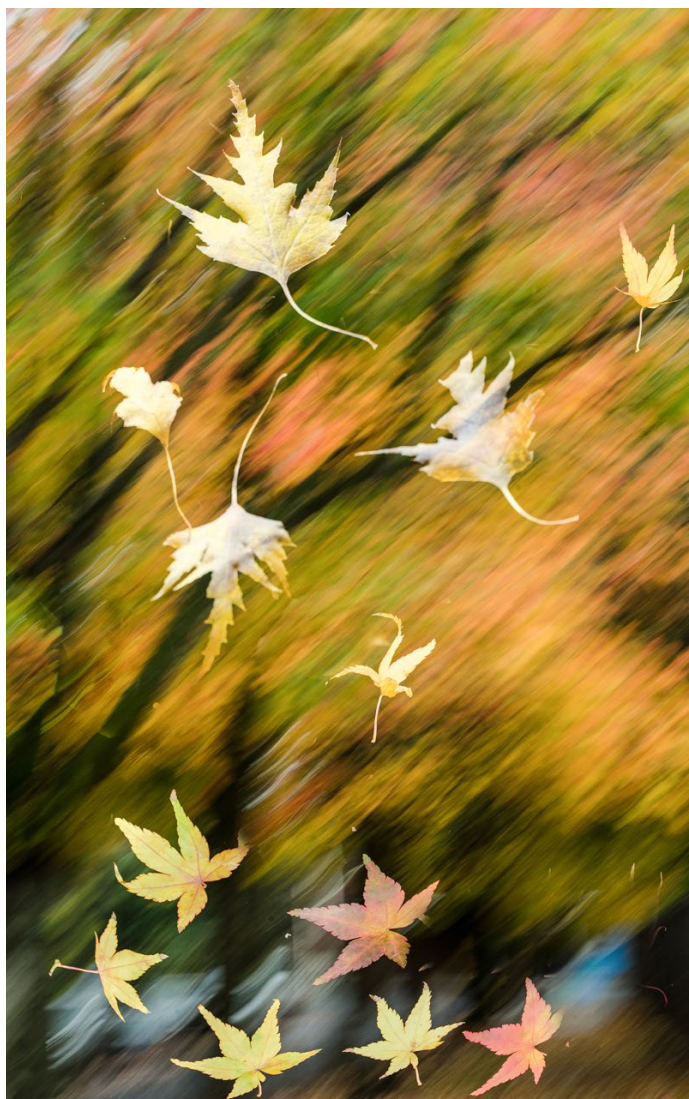


By Jean Matthews, The GC of Palm Beach, Zone VIII, First and Best in Show, *Her Story Our Story*, a GCA Flower Show presented by Green Spring Valley GC, Zone VI. Circa 2012. **Educational Note:** Jean Matthews served as Editor of *Focus* and layout editor from 2014–2018.



By Colesie Sterling, The
Piedmont GC, Zone XII, Class
3: *EyeLINE*, First and Best in
Show and GCA Certificate of
Excellence in Photography,
Headlines, a GCA Major
Flower Show presented by the
Memphis GC and Dixon Gallery
and Gardens, Zone IX. April
13–15, 2018.

Crissy Cherry, Lake Forest GC, Zone XI. From GCA Photography Study Workshop, Charleston, South Carolina (Botany Bay). April 2014. **Educational Note:** Crissy Cherry served as Editor of *Focus* from 2012–2014 and GCA Photography Committee chair from 2014–2016.



By Arabella Dane, North Shore GC of Massachusetts, Zone I. Never exhibited. **Educational Note:** Arabella Dane served as the vice chair of the Photography Committee from 2010–2013.

By Mary Turner, The Seattle GC, Zone XII, Class 5-L: *Vincent Van Gogh*, creative techniques, Second Place and Creativity Award, *Paintings to Pixels*, *Focus* magazine online photography competition. Winter 2015.

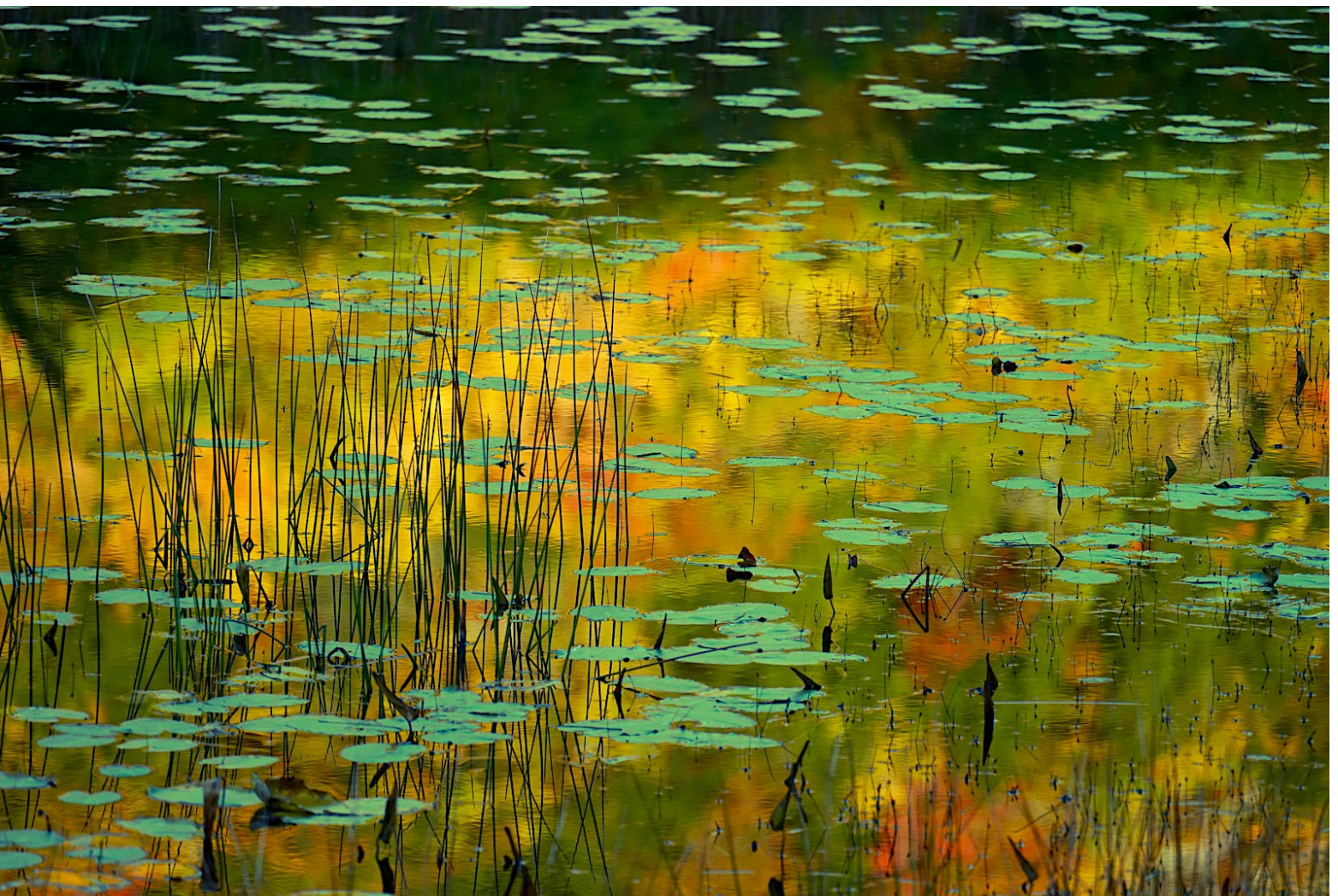


By Debbie Laverell, The Garden Workers, Zone V, Class 4: *Ebb and Flow*, First Place and Best in Show, *Cur-rent*, a GCA Flower Show presented by Hortulus, Zone II. September 29–30, 2023. **Educational Note:** Debbie Laverell served as Editor of *Focus* from 2019–2021.

By Ann Waldman, The Portland GC, Zone XII, Class: *A Visual Surprise in a Landscape*, First Place and GCA Certificate of Excellence in Photography, *Memphis Milano*, a GCA Major Flower Show presented by the Memphis GC and Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Zone IX. April 4–6 2014.



By Sarah Salomon, Perennial
GC, Zone VI, Class 5: *Vincent
Van Gogh, creative techniques,
Honorable Mention, Paintings
to Pixels, Focus magazine online
photography competition.*
Winter 2015.

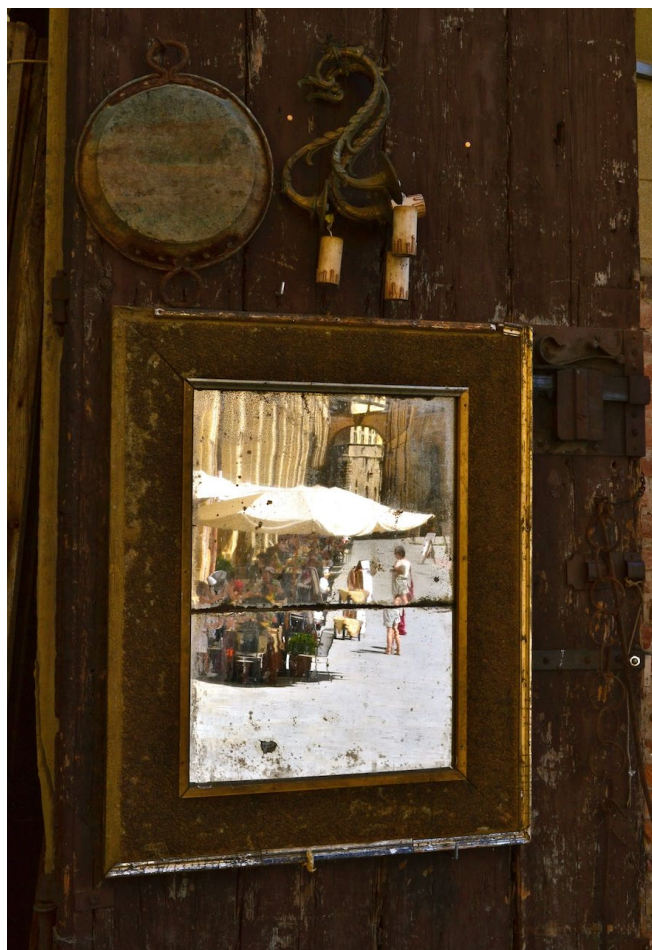


By Libba Wilkes, The GC of Jackson, Zone IX, Class 2: *An
Inspired Landscape, intimate landscape, 20/20 Vision,
Vistas and Views, a virtual GCA Annual Meeting Flower
Show presented by the Zone VII clubs. May 5-7, 2020.*

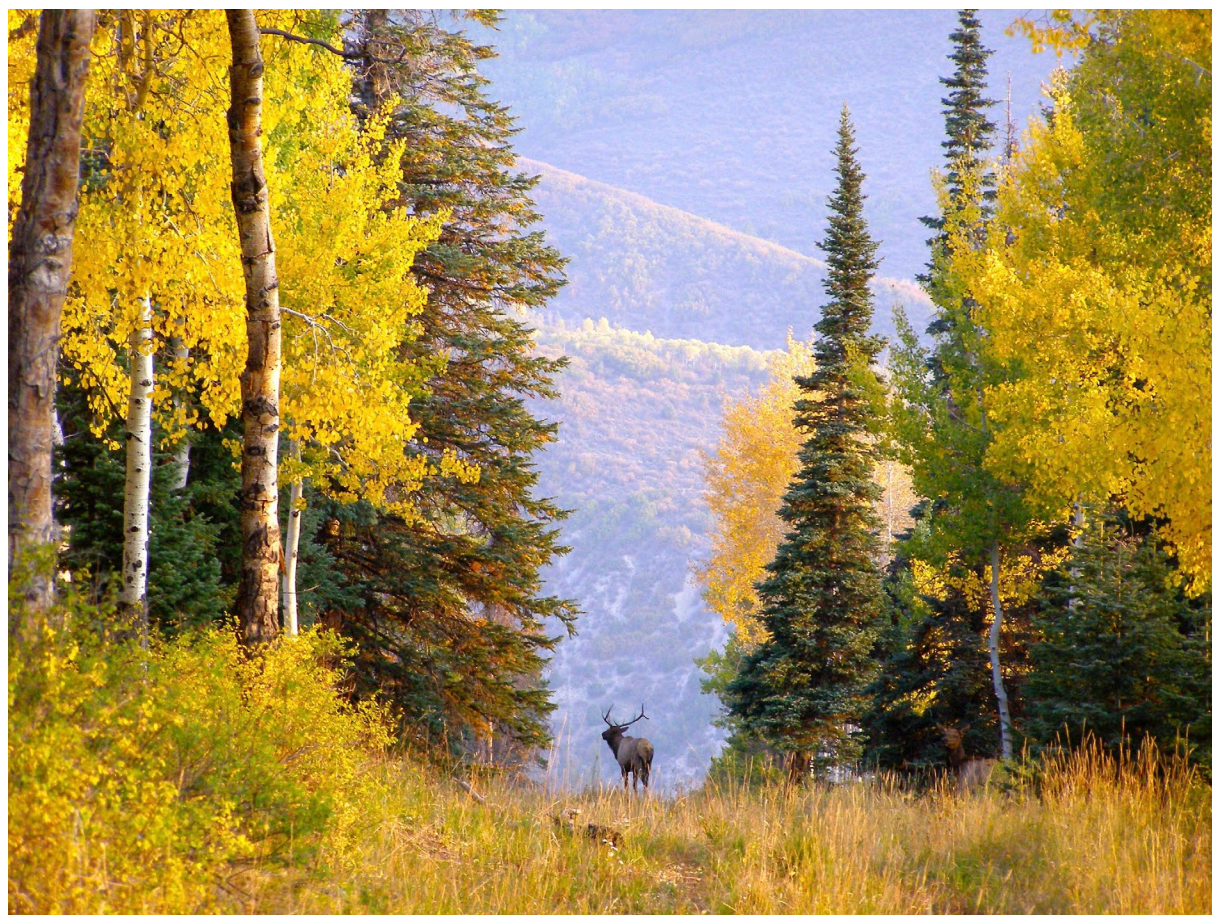


By Ryn Clarke, Shaker Lakes GC,
Zone X, Class 4: *Bridges East and
West*, monochrome, Second Place
and GCA Photography Creativity
Award, *Rooted in Cleveland*, Zone X
Meeting Flower Show presented by
Zone X clubs. June 23–24, 2015.

Carol Bayer, GC of Orange and Dutchess Counties, Zone III, Class: *Reflections*, First Place and GCA Novice Award in Photography, *Florescence Illusions*, a GCA Major Flower Show presented by River Oaks GC and The GC of Houston, Zone IX. April 28–29, 2015.



By Virginia (Giny) Finch (1931–2024), former member of The Portland GC and mother of Molly Jones, The Portland GC, Zone XII. Many thanks to Ann Waldman and Molly Jones for their assistance in providing this photograph.

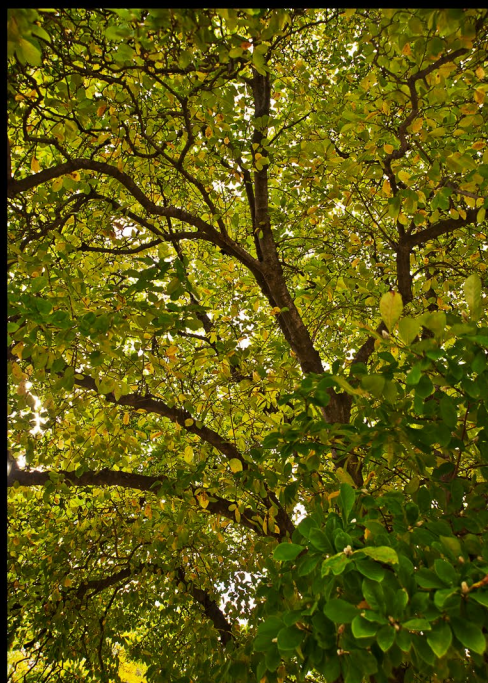


By Susan Strawn, The Gertrude Windsor GC, Zone IX, Class 7: *Across the Wilderness*, First Place, *America the Beautiful*, Focus magazine online photography contest. Winter 2020.

By Evelyn Lorentzen-Bell, Green Fingers GC, Zone II, Class 2: *Bodies of Water*, GCA Photography Creativity Award, *Art en Fleurs Hog Wild in Wisconsin*, a GCA Major Flower Show presented by Green Tree GC, Kettle Moraine GC, Lake Geneva GC, and Town and Country GC, Zone XI. September 27-28, 2016.



By Nadia Valla, Little GC of Rye, Zone III, Class: [unknown], First Place and Best in Show, *Interiors*, a GCA Flower Show presented by Hortulus, Zone II. October 2010.

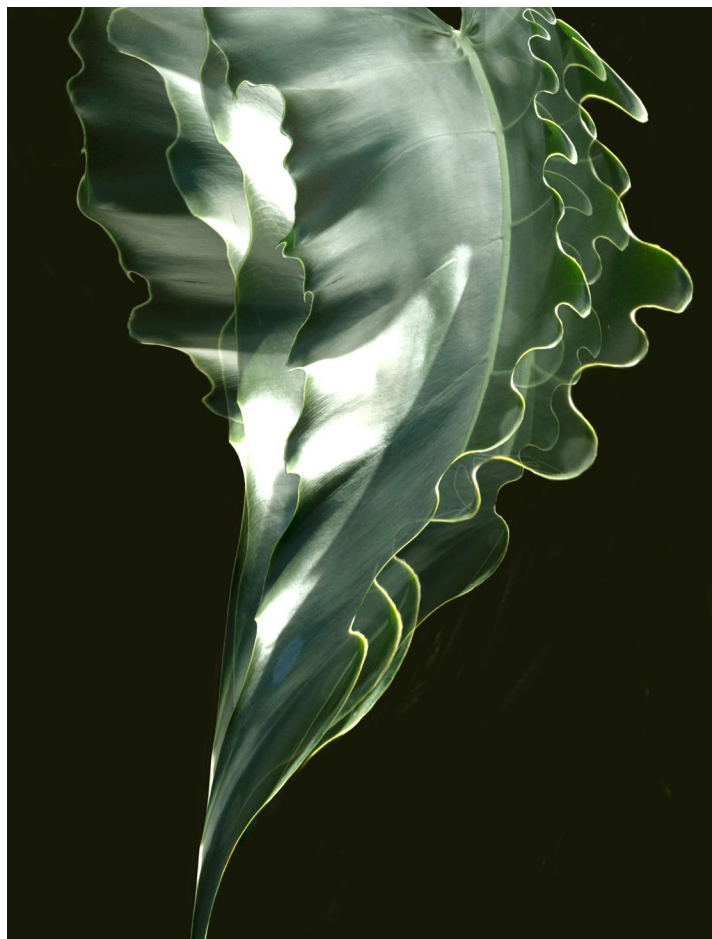


By Loan Tran, Catonsville GC, Zone VI, Class 3: *Triptych*, First Place and GCA Photography Creativity Award, *Kaleidoscope*, GCA Annual Meeting Flower Show presented by Millbrook GC, Zone III. May 17-19, 2015.

Fading Beauty, by Ray Chilton (1940–2024), River Oaks GC, Zone IX, Class: *Abstraction*, GCA Photography Creativity Award, *A Master Class: Art and Flowers*, a GCA Flower Show presented by Laurel GC, Zone IX. November 2013.



By Blair Matthews Louis, Glenview GC, Zone VII, Class: *Backlight*, First Place and Best in Show, *September Light* presented by the GC of Buzzards Bay and Little Compton GC, Zone I. September 2012.
Educational Note: Blair Matthews Louis served as Editor of *Focus* from 2010-2012.



By Gail Atwater, The GC of Honolulu, Zone XII, Class: *Rita Mae Brown: Southern Discomfort*, creative techniques, First Place and GCA Photography Creativity Award, *The Muses of Virginia*, a GCA Flower Show presented by Albemarle GC, Zone VII. October 4–5, 2022.

Focus Challenge # 3 Results: *Intimate Study of Place*

By Jean Jarvis, Piedmont GC, Zone XII and
Vance Lewis, The Little GC of Memphis, Zone IX

The third *Focus* Challenge (*Focus magazine, Spring 2024, page 23*) tasked our photographers to submit a photograph (color or monochrome) that is “a photographic study of a place that evokes its unique character and considers its intimate details with care.” For this challenge, some evidence of the existence of humankind is required, although the photographs do not have to depict people. A statement of intent is also required. Plant material is encouraged, but not required.

We had an enthusiastic response to this innovative class with over 30 entries. We encourage schedule writers to consider including similar classes, perhaps with variations on the requirements, in future flower shows.

We selected four winning images. It proved a difficult task because there were many strong contenders. For those non-finalists, some of the entries had resolution or exposure issues or focused too much on an object rather than the place in which the object inhabited. Take heart—many of the non-winning entries were very good photographs!

Here are the winners and our educational comments. Congratulations!



By Jill Corr, Stonington GC, Zone II

STATEMENT OF INTENT: Peeking through a window at Ballindalloch Castle in Scotland, this photograph offers an exploration of heritage and culture. Framed by rose vines, the marble bust, Chinese porcelain vases, and lamp shade merge past and present into a layered narrative.

EDUCATIONAL COMMENT: This well-exposed and well-balanced photograph beckons the viewer into a private, domestic space. A cherished figurine and blue and white collectable ceramics on the windowsill, a softly pleated lampshade, and a crisply painted window framed by flowering vines suggests a feminine presence. The overcast skies softly illuminate the worn stone structure suggesting an old-world locale while the inside wooden shutters, heavily lined drapes, and pull chords to blinds hint at chillier winter days to come. The statement of intent is well-crafted.

By Claire Smithers
Mellinger,
Albemarle GC,
Zone VII

STATEMENT OF

INTENT: Hanging out with old friends in a hotel room after a funeral and before the reception.

EDUCATIONAL COMMENT:

The late afternoon backlight, the array of surrounding objects, and the female figure sitting calmly in a dress, her face obscured in shadow, all quietly coalesce in this intimate study of place. All these clues invite the viewer to dive in and study the photograph to try and figure out what is going on. The statement of intent introduces a compelling narrative thread and serves as a reminder of the impact a statement of intent can lend to a photograph. This photograph is reminiscent of William Eggleston's work. So well seen.



**By Danna Dearborn,
Piscataqua GC, Zone I**

STATEMENT OF INTENT: While walking the back streets of Ambergris Cay in Belize, this sight filled with colorful juxtapositions and angles appeared. Who wore those shirts? Where is the person now?

EDUCATIONAL COMMENT: Even though this photograph was taken in the middle of the day when light can be harsh, this photograph is perfectly exposed, and the bright light only enhances the soft jewel-tone colors. The wood structure adds interesting texture and contrast. This composition, with the T-shirts blowing in a warm wind, captures a fleeting moment in everyday Caribbean life.



**By Suellen S. White,
GC of Denver, Zone XII**

STATEMENT OF INTENT: In winter, walking the familiar cobblestone square path, gains an ethereal quality when dusted with snow.

EDUCATIONAL COMMENT: The bird's-eye view of this snowy scene of leafless trees, twiggy hedges, and well-trodden pathways tells the viewer that while the circle of undisturbed, snow-covered benches might be inviting in another season, at this moment it is not a place to linger. The small red bag carried by the lone figure lends a creative note of color to this nearly monochromatic composition. All the elements in this scene work together to create a strong sense of place on this dreary, overcast day. The image is somewhat underexposed. Snow is tricky to expose for properly and, when editing, it is often difficult to lighten areas without lifting too much from the shadows. There is a white spot in the center that may be lens flare or possibly an artifact created by shooting through window glass. (It's not a major flaw, just something to note.) This sophisticated composition channels the work of early photographic artists, such as Alfred Stieglitz, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Paul Strand.

THE JUDGING NOOK

Photography Judging and Other Insights

Yellow Book Revisions—Photography Judging

This July, the *Yellow Book*'s photography judging provisions were significantly revised. These important updates are required reading for all GCA photography judges and exhibitors alike.

The principal change is simply structural. The former “principles and elements” framework has been exchanged for a set of “considerations” that explicitly track the five judging criteria by which we judge competitive GCA photography (e.g., creativity, composition, technical skill, interpretation, and distinction). This is consistent with the approach widely used by both amateur and professional photography organizations. In addition, the “conformance” criterion has been removed from the scale of points because it falls under the realm of passing. “Interpretation” is now a sole criterion. The goal of these revisions is to encourage judging decisions to follow competitive judging standards, be less subjective, and achieve more consistent and understandable judging results. See FS&JG (the *Yellow Book*) Book 4, **Judging at Flower Shows** 2024 ed.

Another notable change is the revisions to Book 4's comment writing section. Comments must explicitly address creativity, composition, and/or technical skill; they may also address interpretation or distinction. It's not enough to say, “Exquisite capture!” Comments must explain *why* the photograph is exquisite and do so using the judging criteria. Also, judges are not constrained by a set number of sentences. Rather, comments must consist of two complete “thoughts,” whether that is accomplished in one sentence or four (although judges must also be mindful of space limitations on entry cards.)

Finally, the photography section of Book 5's Glossary of Terms has been revised. See FS&JG Book 5, **Glossary of Terms**, 2024 ed. Previously, all flower show terms for all divisions were combined into one undivided glossary. Now, individual divisional terms have their own divisional section. For photography, many new terms have been added, some removed, and others significantly revised.

All these revisions were unanimously approved by the 2023-2024 Photography and Judging committees and, as of July 2024, are now officially part of the *Yellow Book*.

Some interesting background information informs the rationale for these significant changes. The GCA Photography Committee was officially formed in 2014, having originated as a pilot program under the Judging, and then Flower Show committees. Logically, at that time, the organization and language for judging photography was largely derived from the principles and elements used in judging floral design.



Old Camera, by Benjamin Haas/Adobe Stock.

A common sentiment began echoing among GCA photography judges. Were our judging guidelines aligned with current day professional photography standards? Written literature on the merits of photography included many of the elements we referred to, but not in the construct we were using. Over the past ten years, our photography program has grown up. It was time to take a closer look at our framework for judging and to improve our evaluation of photographs based on merits and weaknesses and to be able to articulate those observations in clear, precise language that both exhibitors and viewers would understand and appreciate.

In early 2024, Susan Van Tassel, the immediate past Photography Committee chair, formed a small ad hoc committee of photography judges, all of whom had exceptional experience serving on the Photography or Judging committees and were experienced in flower shows, schedule writing, exhibiting and judging. Chaired by Lynn Shiverick, the ad hoc committee included Gail Atwater, Anna Forbes, Nancy Keely, Vance Lewis, and Leslie Purple. Together they reviewed the existing principles and elements of composition used to judge photography and returned their recommendations for a new approach to the Photography Committee.

To assist judges with this new approach, the ad hoc committee created a document of practical “ask” questions that judges can use on the judging floor. For example, when a judge is considering a photograph's compositional strength, a judge might ask whether the elements of the photograph work together as a whole, if the composition has a dominant focal point, or conveys visual, emotional or narrative impact. This **cheat sheet** can be printed and laminated for regular use when judging.

The 2023-2024 GCA Photography Committee extends its sincere appreciation to the ad hoc committee, along with recent photography chair, Susan Van Tassel, and judging chair, Polly Glotzbach, for committing their time, knowledge, talent, and support of this endeavor.

—The 2023-2024
GCA Photography Committee



By Shelley Lipton,
The Village GC of Sewickley, Zone V,
Class 4, Still Life, *Eggspectation*,
First and Best in Show, *In Fine Feather*,
a GCA Flower Show presented by
The GC of Allegheny County, Zone V.
May 15-16, 2024.