

A black and white photograph of a bare tree silhouette on a misty lake with its reflection. The tree is on the left side of the frame, and its reflection is visible in the water below. The background is a soft, misty landscape with a city skyline visible in the distance on the right.

TREE PHOTOGRAPHY

By Veronica du Plessis

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In this theme we will be looking for shapes, forms, highlights and shadows. It's very important that the tree (or trees) are the main focal point of the photo.

Once again the use of light is important in making a good photograph. Watch carefully where the light is coming from and how it shapes the shadows.

HDR and blending allowed.
Post editing is recommended.
No AR's.



Photo Credit – Simon Baxter Photography

This theme is a great opportunity to be creative and to experiment:

- with light,
- with shapes,
- with angles,
- with textures,
- with colour etc.

It is open to allow your imagination to capture the essence of your subject, which in this instance is a tree (or trees).

Tree photography is often likened to portrait photography. As with people, each tree is unique and has its own unique character. Light and shadows, angle and composition are some of the most important points to remember in portrait photography, which lends to the same in photographing trees.

There are also many different ways to photograph trees in order to give the photograph more impact, namely

- different times of the day (highlights and shadows)
- different places (lone tree or forests/woods)
- different size and shapes of trees
- different composition (the position of the tree in your image)
- different angles (from the front or the side, or from the bottom upwards)
- different focus (DOF)
- different textures (rough bark, smooth bark, moss, creepers etc)

The list is endless, which is what makes this subject so unique and so much fun (and maybe challenging).

Tip: Remember that side light will work the best in capturing the highlights and shadows, so avoid midday if possible (unless in a forest or wooded area).

The first thing to consider is the context of your main subject.

Are you focusing on a single tree standing by itself or a small group of trees or are there many trees in a wooded area?

What effect will the lighting have on your image? Is the tree in full sun, diffused shade or dappled light? Which direction is the light coming from? Is the light giving sufficient depth to your subject or causing your subject to look flat and lifeless?

The second thing to consider is:

What is the most interesting part of this subject? Is it the texture of the bark or the shape of the branches? Is it maybe the colours? Is it the highlights and shadows that gives the tree that captivating depth? Is it the repetition of several trees standing together or the moody feel of trees peeping out through the mist.

The next thing to consider is:

What do you want your photo to look like? Some words to consider – bright and cheerful, moody, mysterious, awesome, dramatic, quaint.

NB: All the above is important before you begin shooting as taking a photograph of just any tree without first observing it's position, the light, the composition you are looking for, the angle etc, will result in purely a record shot of a tree and will not convey what it was that you wanted to show the viewer.

THE “LONELY TREE” PERSPECTIVE



Photo Credit: Anne McKinnell

Capturing a tree all by itself in a virtually empty landscape can give both the feeling of calm serenity or of loneliness. This type of image emphasizes the shape and the environment in which the tree lives and captures it's story from the surrounds.

Use a tripod to minimize shake and get your result looking sharp. Use a low ISO and set your camera to aperture priority mode. Use an F11 – F14 to achieve a larger depth of field which will make the entire image sharp from front to back.



Photo Credit: Marc du Plessis



THE “WIDE” PERSPECTIVE

This type of image gives you an interesting foreground with a bright background which makes the tree/trees stand out.

Here you can use a wide angle lens if you have one. Low ISO, AV mode, F8-F16.

NB: Use a tripod.

Your goal is to find an interesting foreground with some side light highlighting some of the prominent textures and shapes, also have some light behind the tree in order to make it stand out.

Take your time and walk around the tree until you find the angle and the best light that will give you the shot you are looking for.



Photo Credit: Anne McKinnell

FROM THE “BOTTOM UP”

Accentuating the height of trees is an effective way to portray the awe-inspiring feeling that they can give. This is done by taking a low point of view and looking upwards toward the top of the tree/trees.

You can lay flat on the ground in a densely wooded area and shoot straight upwards. This way you will capture an image in which the tops of the trees all seem to converge together in a display of texture, colours and light.

Watch for the brightness of the sky and the thickness of the leaves, as this could cause the image to be over exposed.

Adjust the brightness of the image in camera (by ISO, F-stop or shutter speed) before you shoot to make sure there is detail in both the highlights and the shadows.

Post editing will also help to bring out the contrasts.

REPETITION

Repetition is easier when you find a group of trees planted in a row. For the best effect, repetition should be combined with other compositional tools such as perspective, texture and contrast.

Use a wide angle lens to include either elements on the ground or elements in the sky. Use a aperture of F8-F14/16 if full focus is required or a lower number for a more blurred background.



Photo credit: Anne McKinnell



Photo Credit: Unknown

SILHOUETTE

A silhouette is effective when the background itself is particularly interesting (like a colourful sunset or sunrise).

Expose your picture for the sky to make sure that the sky is perfectly exposed while the tree itself is completely black. (If you expose for the tree you could have a blown out background).

In this theme, the tree needs to be the main focal point if taken as a silhouette, the tree needs to be sharp and in focus. Use a F8-F16 aperture and a tripod to achieve this.

This can be enhanced in post editing by deepening the black tones which will enhance the silhouette and deepen the colours in the sky.



Photo Credits: Warren Photography

LOOKING CLOSER



Photo credits: Unknown

Zoom in on the finer details of the tree to capture the beautiful textures of the bark, the leave or the fruit of the tree.

Give some thought to exactly what point you want perfectly sharp. Use a shallow DOF to blur the background and direct the focus toward the central focal point. Remember your tripod.

SOME EXAMPLES FOR YOU TO ENJOY



Photo credit: Jotform.com



Photo credit: Jotform.com



Photo credit: Beth Moon Photography



Roots by Zu Sanchez



Photo credit: Dwayne Holmwood



Bamboo Forest by Kyle Merriman



Photo credit: [Expertphotography.com](https://www.expertphotography.com)



Taken in our very own Platbos Forest by Roddy Fox Photography.



Photo Credit: Unknown



A few things to remember when taking these images:

- The tree/trees must be the main focal point
- Clarity and focus
- The story behind the image
- Use of light (highlights and shadows)
- Creativity

There are plenty of examples online for you explore and get your creative juices flowing, as well as some great YouTube video's with some practical advice on "*how to*" so check them out

Buy most importantly

Go and have some fun!!