



Photographing Flowers

Using a Light Pad (light box)

I am sure like many of you, lockdown has provided an opportunity to do some things that perhaps you have been wanting to do but never got around to doing. Using a light pad for high-key photography was one of those things for me. I've often thought of giving it a try, and then I came across a YouTube video by Harold Davis who is a master of light pad photography. ([https://www.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk2JiWXiJYo)

[youtube.com/watch?v=Hk2JiWXiJYo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk2JiWXiJYo)) Harold has a series of five YouTube Videos that discuss this topic. After watching his video, I felt very inspired, I headed over to Amazon and bought myself a light pad. I didn't do a lot of research. I may have even just gone with Amazon's suggestion. I didn't get an expensive one by any means. I ordered the TikTech A4 Ultra-thin Portable LED Light Box.

By Debora Suterko



Debora Suterko

It was only about \$24. I'm sure you can spend much more than that, but I just wanted to give the technique a go before I decided to make any kind of serious investment. I was slightly disappointed when I realized it had to be connected to a power source, thus limiting where I could use it in my home.

It took me a few tries to find the right setup in my home to use the pad. Since you need to be shooting straight down onto the light pad you want to find something to place it on so that you are in a comfortable position when shooting. I have been using a little chest that was just the right height so that I could use my tripod without having to stand on my tiptoes to see through the viewfinder, and I also didn't have to bend over.

After plugging it into the power source, I used my Canon 5DMK IV and my 100 mm macro lens.



Light Pad Twins

I set the camera up on my tripod and connected a remote cable once I realized there were going to be some slow shutter speeds at times. If you don't have one, I'm sure you can just use a time delay that most cameras have. Given the fact that I am using a tripod, my ISO can remain relatively low and my f-stops have been between F11 up to F20 on some of my images. Of course, it depends on the look you are trying to achieve.

I tried following the technique used by Harold Davis of taking multiple exposures of each subject. He states he likes to then combine the images in an HDR program, which I tried as well, but if you do not have an HDR program, you can still get great results. I certainly didn't do the HDR technique on every image. I do recommend taking multiple exposures of each subject. It will be trial and error depending on the lightness or darkness and translucency of each subject. Sometimes I will need to go +2 or +3 on my exposure.

I then processed my images in Lightroom and Photoshop. Many of them I applied a texture to in post processing so they wouldn't have a plain white background, although I think that looks nice as well sometimes. I have many, many textures. Some, I have bought, some I have created myself. I will place the texture image over my light pad image. I will then change the blend mode to my



Dead Leaves

liking. Usually I use multiply, overlay, soft light or hard light. It just depends on the image. I then create a mask and using a black brush will remove the texture from the parts of the image I do not want it. I may partially remove it, or I may reduce the opacity of my brush and only remove some of it. It's all trial and error. Sometimes I use several different textures in several different layers. It's fun to experiment.

I'm having a lot of fun with it. It's a completely different way to shoot. I am still experimenting with it. Obviously, everything is a flat lay, which is certainly a new way for me to compose an image. I find that I can take some quite seemingly uninteresting looking leaves or flowers and photograph them on the light pad, and they instantly come to life! You just never quite seem to know what you are going to get. I took some dead leaves for example, and they just lit up so beautifully. I've only shot about 3-4 sessions so far with the light pad, and during the last one I wanted to see how some lighting from above might look. Since I do not own any lighting or soft box, I merely used a flashlight, and I really liked the look on some of the images. I had to really fight the shadowing, but since I often use a texture on

the background the shadows were not really a huge problem. I may investigate some lighting in the future, but for now, it's just an inexpensive way to try some new techniques. Another plus is that you can shoot indoors, you can shoot at night, and you are not dependent on any light or weather. The box creates its own perfectly even light. ■

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Dropping Leaves