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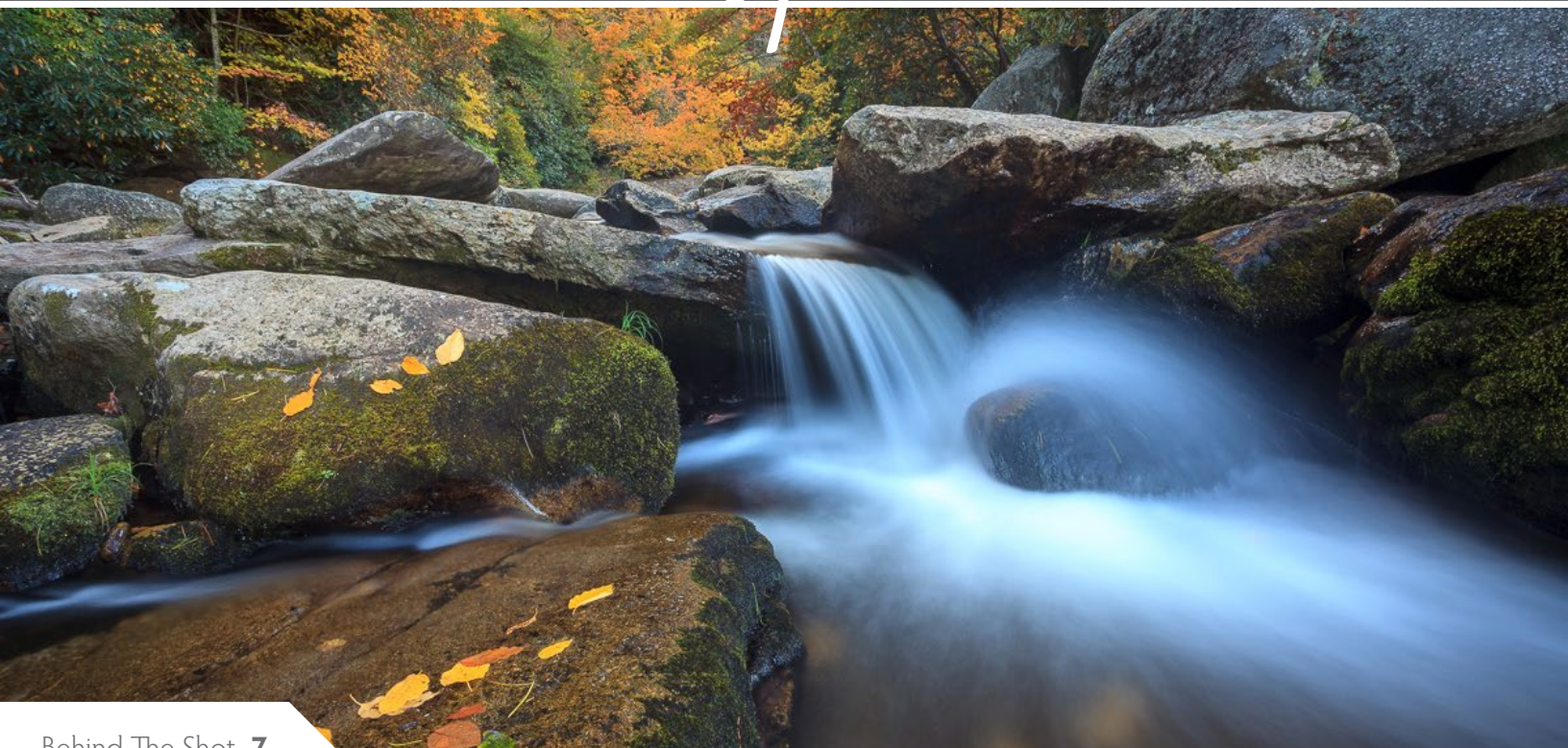
Report

2016 Vol. 11

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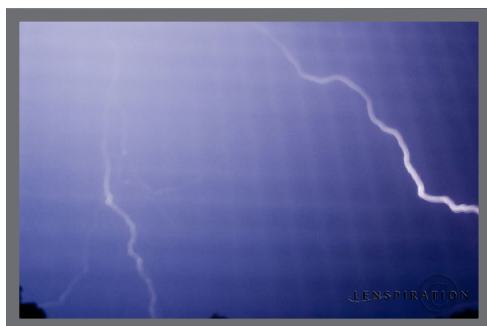


Behind The Shot 7

## 5 Steps to Photographing Lightning

Watch a video of this article at [www.lenspiration.com/qa5stepslightning](http://www.lenspiration.com/qa5stepslightning)

Here's one of the first shots I ever tried to take of lightning. I was pretty proud of it!



Now, looking back, it makes me smile more than admire it. But it was the best I knew how to do at the time. So, don't be discouraged if the first time

you try to shoot lightning it doesn't turn out very well. It takes time and practice to shoot more challenging subjects. And I hope these 5 steps will help you get a better first shot of lightning than I did.

### 1. Choose A Vantage Point

Usually, the more sky included in a shot the better. That's where the show is happening. But if you can find interesting subjects to include in the foreground, that will help make for more interesting pictures.

*Continued on page 5*

## INSIDE

What's New In  
Shoot To Serve **2**

Capturing the Unique  
Beauty Early Autumn **2**

Finding Variety Amidst  
the Fall Colors **3**

EXPLORE: West Hill  
Covered Bridge, VT **4**

FREE Shipping for  
PRO Members only! **6**

CRITIQUE: Misty  
Autumn Morning **6**

Where I'm Learning  
and Growing **12**

Keep Making The  
Most Of PRO! **12**



## New Content in PRO Posing!

View all PRO Posing content at [www.lenspiration.com/proposing](http://www.lenspiration.com/proposing)

Someone asked where I would recommend they go to learn portraiture. At first, I couldn't think of any wholesome place to recommend, so I sat down, did some research and finally came up with this short list of free sources. It's at least a start!

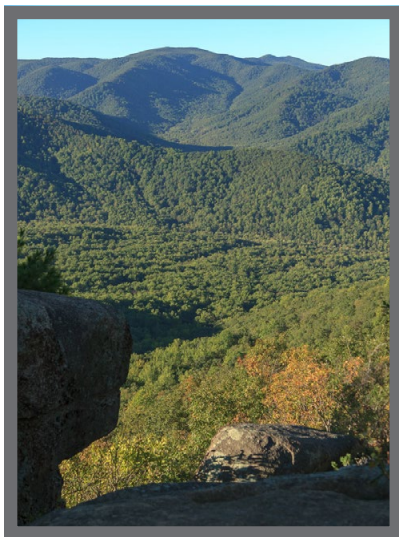
View the list at [www.lenspiration.com/proposing](http://www.lenspiration.com/proposing). ♦

“ I began taking the Basic Course before CAPTURE Vermont. I would highly recommend it for anyone, even if you don't have a clue about photography like me when I started!! I have to say, I learned so much doing the course. And then, I was about to finish my membership when the PRO Critiques started and once I started entering pictures, I began learning so much more. So again, definitely take the course, it will definitely give you the basics at least...and more!!! ”

—Hannah

## Capturing the Unique Beauty Early Autumn

Watch this Making the Most of Your Vacation episode at [www.lenspiration.com/mmearlyautumn](http://www.lenspiration.com/mmearlyautumn)



*All photos in this artical were taken at this location on the same day*

Have you ever been at the right place at the wrong time? Have you ever gone on vacation, hoping against hope that you'd be able to get some amazing pictures of the fall colors, only to be disappointed upon

your arrival that the fall colors hadn't arrived yet? Well, here are some ideas for how to get some awesome autumn pictures even when it still feels totally green outside. Here's 10 of them, to be exact:

### 1. Don't look for what doesn't exist

If you're hoping for amazing autumn colors, and they don't exist, don't waste your energy hoping or looking for them. Die to your expectations and be willing to admit you may not get what you were hoping for. Instead, learn to be content with what God has given and made available for you right now.

So, to put this into practice, if you are looking for color in early autumn, think in terms of yellows and browns, instead of oranges and reds.

There's a whole lot of things that do exist at this time of year that don't exist at any time of year. Juxtaposing green against yellow, or green against orange, or green against red . . . there's very unique situations in early autumn that simply won't be available later in the season.

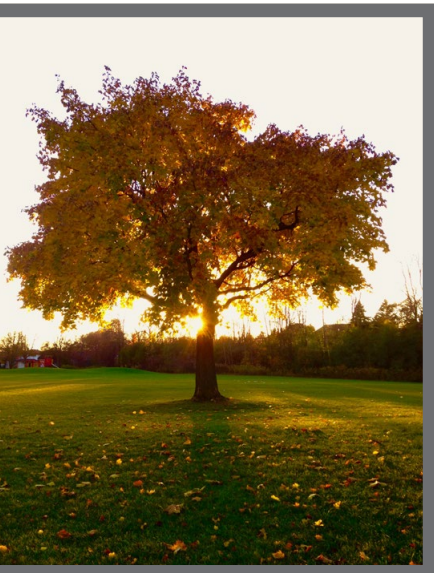
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# Finding Variety Amidst the Fall Colors

By Paul Burgess

Autumn is many photographers' favourite time of year. And it's no wonder! The colours available to work with are fantastic, and it just can't be rivaled by any other season. Let's take a look at a few methods we can employ to help us get the most out of the palettes presented to us, and maybe increase the variety of the pictures we come home with.



*Photo by Paul Burgess*

already great, but I don't think any of us would turn down a boost! Besides the colour benefits, if you have the right lens, backlighting offers the opportunity to create sunstars; just make sure to close your aperture down.

You do have to be careful when shooting directly into the sun, though. Flare and wash-out can be an issue, so make sure you have a lens hood, position yourself in the shade, or otherwise block the sun (if the sun is not in the picture, of course). Also, with all that brightness your camera may want to meter the scene too dark, so you'll have to compensate your exposure for that.

## 1. Utilize back and side lighting

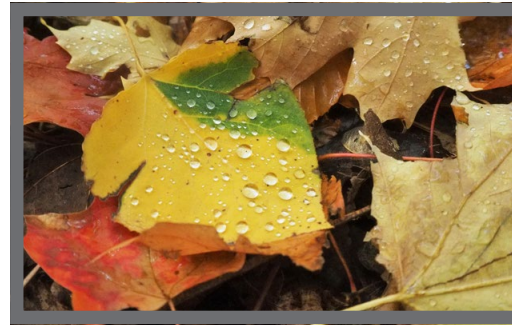
Back and side lighting can be tricky to shoot sometimes, but the results are worth the trouble. When lower light shines through semi-transparent leaves, it illuminates and saturates them like few things can. Sure, the colours are

## 2. Get close

We all want to pull out our wide angle lenses and photograph those sweeping, awe-striking vistas. However, don't

miss the trees for the forest. Small scenes abound in forest settings, and the details in individual leaves can be exquisite. Pull out a longer lens, and get in close for something a little different.

You'll want to watch your backgrounds with small scenes, though. Keep your eyes open for distracting light and dark spots and streaks that can pull attention away from your subject. Move around to either hide these spots or position them so that they don't detract from the composition.



*Photo by Paul Burgess*



*Photo by Paul Burgess*

## 3. Look beyond the leaves

Leaves are the main subject of fall, but there are other colourful things to shoot, too. For us here in the Northeast, a variety of flowers bloom in the autumn: white aster, purple aster, goldenrod, and more. Berries and wild grapes are in season with their own colours; and even domestic

produces, like pumpkins, present unique, seasonal photo opportunities. Check out the side shows!

*Continued on page 4*

Do keep in mind that wind will make photographing things like flowers more difficult. Some plants are so lightweight that even a slight breeze sets them waving. I usually just wait for the wind to cooperate (partially, anyway!), but some photographers use things like reflectors or umbrellas to help block the breeze and keep things still. Also, a shallow depth of field can really make the difference between good and great when you're doing closeup work, so try to get your aperture as wide as possible. As a side

benefit, this makes hand-holding shots much more easy and more available. ♦

*Paul Burgess of Ontario, Canada, enjoys photographing the intricate details close to home. Read more of his perspective at [www.pjbphotography.wordpress.com/blog](http://www.pjbphotography.wordpress.com/blog)*



Photo by Paul Burgess



## EXPLORE: West Hill Covered Bridge, Vermont

View this pin on the Scouting Guide at [www.lenspiration.com/map](http://www.lenspiration.com/map)

**GPS:** 44.867541, -72.648015 **Rating:** 2

**Description:** A little covered bridge nestled in the backwoods of the Montgomery area.

**Accessibility:** Not far from Route 118, a very rough, dirt road to get to it. On the western side of the bridge there is a little pull-off spot for parking.

**Surroundings:** Mostly wooded. A stream runs under it with a little waterfall. There are limited good angles from which to shoot the bridge, but the stream and waterfall make extra shooting opportunities.

**Time of Day:** Cloudy seemed best. The trees created too much spotted light when the sun was out. Also, I don't suggest you go on a hot summer afternoon; the waterfall pool is used as a swimming hole.

**Time of Year:** It was nice in July, but I'm guessing it would be even better in autumn when the colours are at their peak. This calculator should help know

when that is: <http://www.foliage-vermont.com/foliageinflash.htm>

**Pros:** It's a very pretty, quaint bridge, not far from multiple other scenic spots like Comstock Covered Bridge, Jay Peak, etc.

**Cons:** The waterhole created by the waterfall just below the bridge is a favourite swimming hole. We didn't shoot the waterfall at all for that reason.

**Restrictions:** The land around the bridge/stream is private, but the owners allow people to go on it provided they don't litter.

**Other Notes:** <https://www.coveredbridgemap.com/vt/>

**Scouted By:** Frazer Family

Silhouettes of trees in the foreground, open water allowing you to see closer to the horizon, or cityscapes lit up in the foreground are all common foreground elements. (Just be aware that if the foreground element is not in silhouette, than it can be pretty difficult to get the right balance for exposure and you may want to leave that challenge for level two.)



When looking for a vantage point, find a place that's dry, whether that's in your car, on a porch, or from your bedroom window.

A good vantage point may take some scouting ahead of time. Choose a location that excludes foreground distraction like street lights and telephone wires.

And of course, be lightning-wise and have a safety plan just in case something unexpected happens. Lightning is no respecter of persons.

## 2. Gather the Right Equipment

First, you need a **stable surface** to shoot from. I usually use a tripod but you can use a table, rock, window sill or anything else that will let the camera stay put without you having to touch it. Bean bags are handy for making an uneven surface a suitable resting place for a camera.

When it comes to lenses, I suggest you start with a **wide angle lens**. Lighting generally shows up sporadically across the sky so if you compose for the whole sky you'll be sure to get at least something. The further away the storm is, or the more control you want to have with composition, the more telephoto you can go.

I recommend getting a **cable release** or some remote control mechanism that will allow you to trigger the shutter without having to touch the camera.

Make sure you're camera battery is full and your memory card is empty. Bring a flashlight too. Flashlight are always helpful for changing settings in dark.

## 3. Choose Your Camera Settings

So let's say you're on location now. You've found yourself a good spot and you've got your camera set up on a stable surface. Now let's figure out what camera settings to set the camera to.

First, let's set the **focus**. Since the lightning is going to be in the sky, I will set the camera to manual focus, focus on the sky and then leave it alone. As long as I don't move the camera, I should be set. If it's completely black outside and you can't focus on the sky, it usually works just as well to focus on the horizon, or even a distant street light. Focusing on something in the far distance is basically the same as setting the focus to infinity. Don't expect the autofocus to focus on the lightning.

Next, I check to see if I'm shooting in the **RAW file format**. This way, if I overexpose or underexpose some really great shots on accident, I'll have more pixels to leverage when fixing it up in Lightroom.

This would also be a good time to set up **White Balance** if you'd like. A cooler white balance usually sets the mood well for lightning.

*Continued on page 6*