

Through The Lens

*A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts.
After the click of your camera, you're only half done!*



Springtime photography!

by Lynda Buske

I do a fair amount of photography in the winter but I realize others are not inspired until spring arrives! This article focuses on tips for shooting early blooms like tulips and crocuses as well as spring runoff. Both of these subjects are close at hand in the Ottawa area so lucky us! There are many icy rivers that begin to melt in April and depending on the exposure (or lack thereof) to the sun, there may be still a bit of ice in May.

There are many rivers in the Ottawa/Gatineau area that will be bursting with extra water for the next while. Within the city, you can see the runoff at Hog's Back Falls, Rideau Falls, Chaudiere Falls or Princess Louise Falls. If you prefer a more natural setting, there is flowing water in Almonte, Pakenham, Blakeney Rapids and multiple spots along the Rideau Canal system. On the Quebec side, you can visit falls near Luskville, Wakefield, Kingsmere or Meech Lake (Carbide Wilson ruins) that are all quite accessible.

The thing I love best about ice is that the formations are completely different every year or even day by day. You can shoot same location each year and you will have unique images depending on the winter freeze/thaw patterns. When the spring temperatures melt the water, it adds to the beauty and gives a great opportunity for long exposures. So, get your tripod ready or set your camera on something steady. Alternatively, you can set your cell phone to long exposure and hold it as still as possible. It will take multiple exposures and combine them so the water is soft but everything else is in focus. However, you don't have the same control as you do with a traditional camera/tripod combo.

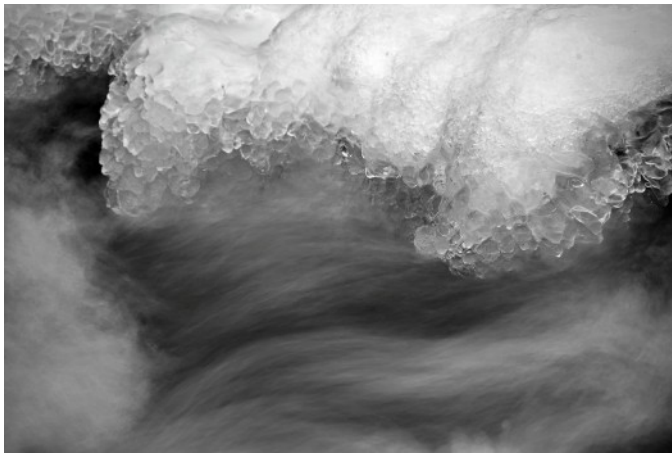
If using a DSLR or mirrorless, be sure to take the ISO off auto and set it to 100. Your camera does not know you are using a tripod and will automatically try to bump the speed by increasing the ISO because it doesn't believe you can hand-hold the camera and get an image without motion in the frame. This means you may not get the smoothness in the water you want and it may add graininess in low light situations. Once you are on a tripod, one option is to set your camera to shutter priority, select the shutter speed you want and the camera will adjust the aperture. Or you can set the aperture priority, set the aperture for the depth of field you want and then see what the speed will be. In either situation, you may find the camera cannot give you the speed you wish due to too much light. In this circumstance, use a neutral density filter which will cut down on the amount of light by anywhere from 2 stops to 8 stops or even more. This is particularly useful on sunny days when the light is reflecting off snow. If you don't have a filter, choose an overcast day and as small an aperture (high number) as possible.



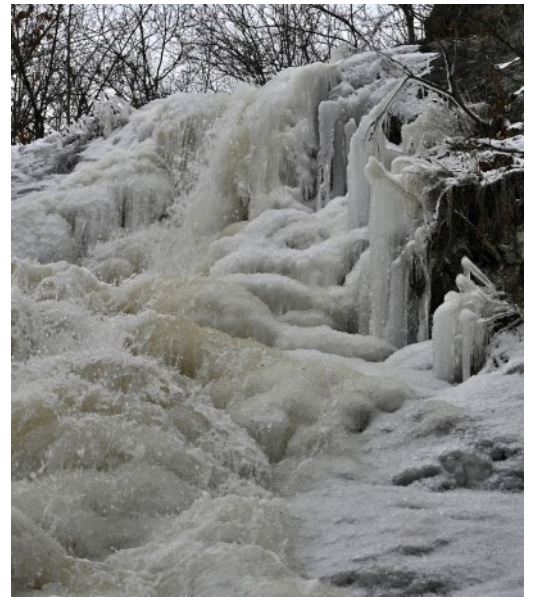
f14, 1.3 sec, ISO 100



Cell phone set to long exposure



f8, 1/3 sec, ISO 100



f11, 1/200 sec, ISO 100

As the snow is disappearing and the ice is melting, the tulips and crocuses are getting ready to bloom. The best tip I can give you is to get down low when you photograph them. Otherwise, you end up with a lot of dirt in your image as there is no green undergrowth at this time of year. If you want to shoot a single blossom, make sure it fills the frame and there is a soft background (wide aperture) so again less mud visible.



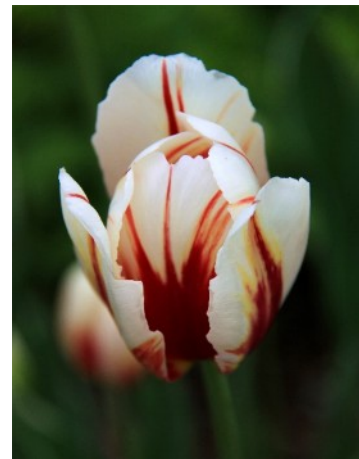
Too much visible mud



Shoot lower.



Catch early morning or late afternoon light.



Choose a wide aperture for soft background

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