

Portfolio Competition 2025

A guide for photographers



What is the portfolio category about?

The Portfolio Competition offers all entrants a unique opportunity to have your photography judged for an RHS Medal. It offers entrants the ability to:

- Submit a body of work based on a series of 6 images that have a cohesive theme within the spectrum of plants, gardens and landscapes.
- All entries must include a hanging plan and a (maximum) 250-word statement describing the work.
- All entries are presented and assessed by the panel of portfolio judges.
- Shortlisted entrants are then invited to prepare their work in print (including mount) ready for hanging and exhibition at the prestigious RHS Botanical Art & Photography Show at Saatchi Gallery in June 2025.
- Portfolio exhibits are judged at the RHS Botanical Art & Photography Show against a set of RHS portfolio competition criteria.
- The Royal Horticultural Society offers medal awards in Gold, Silver Gilt, Silver and Bronze.
- A 'Best Portfolio Photography exhibit' with a prize is awarded to the most outstanding exhibit. Additional awards for Best Single Image and Judges Special Award are also awarded by the judging panel, as well as a People's Choice award which is voted for by visitors to the show and members of the public.

What is the process for entering?

- Entry to the Portfolio competition is free.
- Entries must contain 6 images of 4 -10MB in size and include a hanging plan, a written statement explaining the motivation behind the capture of the collection, the techniques used and any other relevant information.
- To submit your free entry, send your image files and other accompanying documentation (image transfer sites are available, such as WeTransfer / Dropbox) to Photoportfolio@rhs.org.uk
- Entries must be submitted by the deadline of 10am (UK time) on Friday 31 January 2025. Only one entry will be permitted per person.
- Shortlisted entrants are invited to exhibit at the RHS Botanical Art & Photography Show in June 2025. If shortlisted entrants are unable to submit their work for exhibition in the same competition year, they have the option to defer to the following year. However, the work will not be automatically selected for exhibit and will be subject to the same judging and selection processes as the entries shortlisted the following year.
- Judging takes place at the RHS Botanical Art & Photography Show in June 2025 prior to the opening of the exhibition and considers all aspects of the entry against RHS portfolio competition criteria, including how it is displayed.

- Medals and awards are presented to exhibitors prior to the exhibition opening to the public.

Why should I enter?

Entering the Portfolio competition brings a variety of benefits for professional and amateur photography enthusiasts alike. All submitted entries are carefully reviewed by the judging panel.

If your work is shortlisted and selected for exhibition, it will be seen by visitors to the show including potential buyers and commissioners. This is an opportunity for exhibitors to sell and promote their work to a wider audience. In addition, a selection of Portfolio entries and winners may also be eligible to see their work exhibited at RHS Gardens across the country with exposure to an even larger audience. The RHS is also committed to sharing the best images from Portfolio in The Garden magazine and on the RHS website bringing your work to an audience of over 600,000 RHS members.

Portfolio rules and regulations

1. Image requirements

1.1. All photographs must be mainly of plants, flowers or gardens or some aspect of botany or horticulture, including fungi and lichens. Entries can include people working or interacting within a horticultural environment. Images which include other aspects of garden wildlife such as birds, mammals or invertebrates must ensure that they are balanced with sufficient plant content and that the wildlife content is not dominant.

1.2. Photographs that have been enhanced digitally will be permitted, but entrants must indicate where digital enhancements have been used in their initial submission statement and, if shortlisted this information must be present on literature or interpretation to support their display.

1.3. All aspects of every submitted photograph must be the photographer's own work.

1.4. Black and white or colour photographs are accepted, but not a mixture of both.

1.5. Judges will not favour any one photographic style over another. However, they will expect entrants to use their chosen techniques with awareness and sensitivity and to ensure that the techniques used are beneficial to understanding of the plant content.

1.6. Images which have been previously exhibited at an RHS show are not permitted.

2. Series requirements

2.1. A minimum of six images in a series or on a distinct common theme within the spectrum of plants, gardens and landscapes.

2.2. The choice of subject is left to the photographer. This might be as general as 'Winter' or as specific as 'The genus Dahlia'.

2.3. There must be a stylistic integrity throughout the display.

3. Pre-selection for previous medal winners

3.1. Pre-selection is no longer available for previous winners of medals in RHS Portfolio.

3.2. All entrants, including past winners, must submit their entry for shortlisting by the deadline of 10am (UK time) on Friday 31 January 2025.

3.3. Entrants who have deferred their selected Portfolio will be contacted to confirm whether they wish to exhibit in 2025. Such entries will be judged again and may or may not be selected for exhibition again.

4. Exhibition requirements

Shortlisted entrants will be invited to print and mount their work for exhibition at the RHS Botanical Art & Photography Show at Saatchi Gallery in June 2025 to be judged for an RHS medal. Entrants will be responsible for the cost of printing and mounting their work as well as getting it to the gallery. Framing and return of work will be covered by the RHS. Mount style and size will be specified by the gallery and details will be provided to selected photographers. If selected for exhibition, all submitted images will need to be correctly identified and labelled with Latin names where relevant. Help is available with styling of names and identifications.

5. Judging, awards and prizes

5.1. The following Royal Horticultural Society medals are available for award:

- Gold
- Silver-Gilt
- Silver
- Bronze

5.2. A cash prize of £500 plus an RHS gift membership is awarded to the Portfolio named Best Portfolio Exhibit. A glass trophy/vase is awarded for photographers voted for Best Single Image, Judges Special Award and People's Choice award.

5.3. Photographs are judged as a complete display. If one or more images are of a lower standard within the series, the level of award will be affected.

5.4. Entries are shortlisted anonymously with photographer's names only available to the judges at the final exhibition after judging has concluded.

5.5. Judges take into account the overall impression of a display, the botanical and horticultural content and photographic quality, including presentation details such as mounting, labelling and framing.

5.6. Gold medals are only awarded to exhibits of the highest standards. The judges adhere to strict guidelines and where necessary, decisions are reviewed by a Moderator to ensure consistency.

5.7. The decision of the judges is final.

5.8. Feedback is available ONLY TO EXHIBITORS on request after judging has concluded.

5.9. Medal cards will be placed on exhibits. Additional cards may be ordered from the RHS at the show. Each duplicate medal card costs £5.

Frequently asked questions

Is my photography good enough?

Portfolio is judged against a variety of criteria including the technical execution of the photography, the horticultural content of the images, how the portfolio is presented and how the portfolio hangs together as a whole. The only way to really know is to enter, it's free and those invited to exhibit their work at the show can request feedback after judging to help improve – there is nothing to lose.

What is the timeline for Portfolio?

Portfolio entry opens in November 2024 and the deadline for entries is 10am (UK Time) on Friday 31 January 2025. Shortlisted entrants who have been selected to exhibit their work will be contacted in Feb/Mar 2025 and judging will take place at the RHS Botanical Art & Photography Show in June 2025.

Isn't printing and hanging an exhibition expensive?

To minimise costs to the photographer, the RHS and Saatchi gallery will cover the costs of framing the work and returning it to you after the show. The costs to the photographer are therefore limited to printing and card window mounting (also called matting) the work.

Who are the judges?

Portfolio is judged by members of the RHS Portfolio Judging Panel. Panel members come from a wide range of backgrounds, some are professional plant and garden photographers. Others are photographers working in other fields. Some have their background in

plantsmanship or gardening but all have a keen interest in photographic art and plants. Judges are selected each year, and they do change year on year depending on their availability.

Can I discuss my entry with someone?

If you are considering entering Portfolio for the first time and have questions which this guide does not answer, please contact the RHS Portfolio Secretary Claire Allnutt via email at photoportfolio@rhs.org.uk.

If you have entered Portfolio, we are unable to enter into discussions about your entry until after the selection meeting and provision of feedback. If you have been selected to exhibit your work and would like to discuss your exhibit, please contact the RHS Portfolio Secretary Claire Allnutt via email at photoportfolio@rhs.org.uk.

Please do not contact members of the RHS Photographic Art Judging Panel directly about Portfolio.

Any enquiries addressed to Panel members directly will be forwarded to the RHS Portfolio Secretary for response.

When and where will the exhibition be and what if I can't make it?

The exhibition will be at the RHS Botanical Art & Photography Show at Saatchi Gallery which will open to the public on Friday 13th June 2025. There is no requirement for photographers to be present at the exhibition and it will not affect the judging. However, there will be potential press and networking opportunities as well as an opening preview night gala on Thursday 12th June 2025 (guest list only) which photographers and their guests are invited to attend.

