



Photography Tips

Before You Begin

A stunning photograph can go a long way toward showing the craftsmanship and creativity involved in the design and construction of an installation. Photographs of award recipients dazzle audiences year-round: at the International Pool | Spa | Patio Expo, in promotional materials and displays, and in both national and international newspapers and magazines, representing the industry's most beautiful work to the media, consumer and industry colleagues.

When deciding which projects to enter and how to photograph them in their best light, you should first consider the impression you want to convey. This will determine the setting, the lighting, the angle, and just about every other aspect of the shoot.

It can be extremely useful to review photos of past years' winning entries. This is one of the best ways to get ideas on how to present your installation. Trade magazines are a good source for photographs of winning entries.

Need help finding a photographer? Visit the Professional Photographers of America online at www.ppa.com. If you cannot hire a photographer, or simply want to take the pictures yourself, here are some tips to get you started.

Helpful Hints

Once you're ready to photograph your installations, keep in mind the suggestions below. Following them will help give you the advantage needed to put you in the recipients' circle!

The setting and lighting are important components to consider when setting up the shot. They can add great aesthetic value to your photograph.

Mature Landscaping

Allow ample time for trees, bushes, plants, and flowers to grow before photographing. (This is the reason behind APSP's policy to allow installations completed as much as five years prior to the competition—it may take several years for the landscaping to mature.)

Time of Day

The time of day can set the mood for a particular shot, but make sure there's enough light. The best light is in the early morning, shortly after sunrise, or late afternoon when the sun is setting. The middle of the day has the harshest light and makes objects less appealing. Avoid shaded areas, which can make it difficult to view important features of the installation. Do NOT submit dark or blurred photos.

Nighttime photos can show off dramatic lighting, but require a long exposure and firm support for the camera (see ***Hold it Steady!*** below). **Note:** If you submit a nighttime photo, you must also submit a daytime photo of the same installation.

Point of View

Take advantage of any natural surroundings, such as mountain range or a grove of trees—they can provide a beautiful backdrop for the setting. Put the sun behind you. Make sure the sun is to your back when taking the pictures. This will produce color and shape, and avoid shadows. Try to shoot from as high up as possible, allowing the installation to fill more of the picture space. Also, use the angles. Don't be afraid to be creative. Take pictures of the pool, hot tub or water feature from a few different angles.

Avoid Clutter

Is there clutter around the pool, hot tub or water fixture? Is the water clear of debris? Is the patio furniture clean and well-placed? Is there anything you can add to the area to make it more presentable?

Make sure the pool or spa is clean inside and out, and the surrounding area is neat. Keep equipment and toys out of the photo.

Hold It Steady!

Have you ever taken a bunch of pictures and had them come out blurry? This often happens due to "camera shake." Avoid it by keeping the camera steady. Use both hands, resting your elbows on your chest. Or better yet, use a tripod or other support.

This is your opportunity to show off your best work!

- Highlight the interesting aspects of the installation—such as handcrafted tile work, a rock waterfall, special lighting, or a vanishing edge.
- Make sure the photograph gives a good representation of the pool's and/or spa's shape and size. The entire installation should be shown in one photograph.
- The photograph should exclude any electrical wires, telephone poles, trees, fences, etc., which might block the view of the installation.
- Avoid photographing a product in disrepair. Cracks, bubbles, delimitation, etc. will adversely affect an entry's chance of winning.
- Make sure the installation complies with all applicable safety standards, and there are no safety hazards present