Water Droplet Photography

Almost any subject can make an interesting image when photographed through a sprinkling of water droplets.

Tools

- Glass – A sheet of clear, clean glass such as window or picture frame glass.
- RainX (or other rain repellent) – This is made to repel water on a car's windshield. For photography, it helps the water droplets maintain their form rather than running.
- Supports for the glass – The glass should be raised 8-10'' above the subject. The glass can be propped on two stacks of books of the same height, or on cans, or whatever is handy.
- Photo subject – Relatively flat subjects work best. Consider flowers, photos, colorfully patterned paper or material, etc. Experiment! That's half the fun. If you are using an individual item, place it on some type of complementary background to fill the rest of the image.
- Water/Glycerin – Droplets can be made with water, but the drops hold together better and can be made larger using glycerin or a mixture of water with glycerin. (Glycerin is available in any drug store.) Use an eyedropper, syringe, or hypodermic needle to place the drops on the glass.
- Camera – A macro lens is preferred.
- Tripod – This can be done without a tripod, but the focusing will be more difficult.

Preparation

- Clean the glass and make sure there is no lint left on it. Spray the glass with the RainX and wipe off the excess following product directions. Allow to dry. CAUTION – Read RainX labels for use and safety information.
- Place the glass on the books or cans (or whatever props you are using). Make sure it is level.
- Place the subject (and background) under the glass. It should be roughly 8-10" below the glass. Modify the distance as needed. Note – the image in the water droplet will be upside down, so if there is a "right way up" either position the subject upside down (so the reflection is in the proper position) or flip the image in processing.
- Using the eye dropper/needle, place water/glycerin drops on the glass. Any pattern is fine. Try various options. You should now see the subject in the water drops.
- If additional light is needed, place the light source between the glass and subject, aimed at the subject (without lighting the glass itself).

Photography

Focus your camera on the water droplets (not the actual subject). The image in the droplets should be sharp, with the actual subject forming a soft, blurred background. Start at f8 and vary as needed to keep the image in the drops sharp and the background blurred. You can vary the distance between the subject and the glass also until you get the effect you like.

As you photograph, try moving the subject around until the reflections and background are the way you like them. Focus on different drops or groups of drops. Move and change the subject/background. Try various sizes of water droplets. Explore the effect with various depths of field. Play and have fun!