

Storing images

By Brent Wilson



Long gone are the days when a roll of film was sent to the chemist, you waited and picked up a packet of glossy 6" x 4" prints. You probably still have them stashed away somewhere. But how do you store your digital images?

Start by determining how many photographs you have, what you use them for, and what level of image quality you require. While storing images on a computer hard drive is an alternative, keep in mind it will run out of memory or crash, and you could lose all your photographs!

Alternatives

Burning images to disc, CD or DVD, is time consuming and the discs need to be stored. For backup, I burn images to DVD and then store them in filing cabinets. Unfortunately, this isn't a long-term solution because CDs and DVDs have a limited shelf life.

USB memory sticks are easy to store, have a variety of different storage capacities (from 1Gb to 256 Gb) are portable and relatively cheap. But sorting and cataloguing is difficult and they have an average lifespan of 10 years, depending on quality.

The easiest and most efficient way of storing images is with an external hard drive. I use two 4 terabyte hard drives. They are a copy of each other, so if one corrupts or stops working, I have a back up.

Don't skimp when buying a hard drive. Buy a reputable brand and get one or two with large storage capacities because you will be amazed at how quickly they fill.

Storing digital photographs remotely on the Cloud is another alternative. Images can be managed, backed up, and accessed via the internet. Costs vary depending on the plan, bandwidth, and the file size. So it's best to shop around for price and what will work for you.

There are two major downsides to Cloud storage. One is accessibility - no internet access also means no access to images. The other concern is data security. There is always the risk that someone could hack into the system and steal your images.

When thinking about image storage options it's vital to consider their purpose and end use. Are they a photographic reminder of a garden you visited? Are they an ongoing record of your garden that might one day be turned into a book or series of articles? This means the quality must be good.

When you think about how many photos you might take in a month, multiply it by 12 for approximately how many in a year and the resulting several thousand digital images might be surprising. Remember, whatever storage system you choose it needs to be reliable and searchable.

Brent Wilson is a professional photographer - brentwilsonphoto.com

From shoot to storage

- I use a Canon and shoot RAW CR2 files. Nikons shoot RAW NEF. These are high quality large files. Every brand of camera has its own type of files. You can shoot JPGs, which are smaller, lower quality files, which suit most amateur photographer's needs.

- I upload files to my computer and convert them in Adobe DNG Converter to a Digital Negative. I then open them in Adobe Bridge, where I batch name the files. For example, after a garden shoot I title all the files with the name of the garden and an individual tag number such as SLADE_GARDEN_1234567.dng.

- I then add metadata. In the drop down FILE INFO panel, I add any information that is relevant to the specific image. For example, the garden's name, type, location, the owner's name, the scientific and common name of individual plants and relevant copyright information.

- I open all the images in Photoshop where I make adjustments to colour, contrast, sharpness and crop if needed. I then save these files as TIFFs or JPGs. These are then uploaded to two separate hard drives and burnt to disc.