

WATER FEATURES

There are many sorts of water features available from a humble small-scale fountain or waterfall for your pond to stand-alone pebble fountains or large-scale sheets of glass with cascading curtains of water. However, remember that all running water features need a power source – and water and electricity can be a deadly combination, so use a qualified electrician to install your chosen design.

Visit your garden centre or nursery for ideas, or look out for the range of contemporary water features on display at garden shows.

- To create a pebble fountain, dig a hole about 60cm deep. Line with sand and place a square of thick felt or carpet in the centre. Cover with a butyl liner. Build a central tower for the pond pump three bricks high, cemented and covered with galvanised wire mesh. Place the pump on top of the mesh (here the cable was run discreetly under the adjacent plants or a channel for it could be drilled through the side) surrounded by another layer of bricks. Fill pool with water and test the pump. Lay a galvanised wire mesh grill over the top of the hole. Cover with larger bricks and stones, then top with colourful and interesting pebbles.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Spade & fork
- Hose
- Spirit level
- Board
- Builders' sand
- Pool or carpet underlay
- Choice of liner
- Edging material
- Marginal plants
- Aquatic plants
- Hessian (sacking) or netting
- Gravel
- Aquatic planting soil
- Pond pump
- Bricks
- Cement
- Galvanised mesh
- Wire cutters
- Large stones
- Pebbles

For more information:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice
www.plantforlife.info

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THE EASY GUIDE TO PONDS & WATER FEATURES



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GARDEN PONDS

A garden pond offers tranquility, a growing environment for interesting plants and provides a home for wildlife such as frogs, toads and insects such as dragonflies. When designing your pond, ensure that it does not look artificial and out of place in your garden - choose from a formal pond (probably rectangular or circular, built from concrete and edged with paving or tiles), an informal pond (with a slightly irregular curved shape and perhaps boulders or rocks placed around it) or a shallow wildlife pool (with gently sloping edges and lots of plants in and around the water). A pond without fish is easier to manage and often better for wildlife.

SITING A POND

Once you've chosen the design that best complements your garden style, find the best spot for the pond.

- Consider how it will look from different angles in the garden and from indoors - is it easy to see from the room that you spend the most time in?
- What size will it be? Make it as big as possible to offer more room for plants, fish and wildlife, as well as giving an attractive open water area.
- What type of plants do you want to grow - different plants require varying depths of water. Ask your garden centre or nursery for advice.
- Try to avoid shady areas, especially with overhanging deciduous trees. Dropped autumn leaves will clog up the pond.

TYPES OF POND

Pond liners come in four types:

- preformed rigid glass fibre (available from aquatic stockists, easy to install, durable but expensive and gives a less natural finish)
 - butyl flexible liner (available from aquatic stockists, gives a natural shape but requires more work to install and can leak)
 - plastic or polythene liner (like a butyl liner but more flimsy)
 - concrete (ideal for geometric shapes but probably a job for a builder).
- To calculate the size of a flexible liner use the following formula:
- Length plus twice required depth
 - Width plus twice required depth

This allows for the depth of the water and also to form a 25-30cm wide and deep shelf where marginal plants can be grown in planting baskets.



INSTALLING A POND

Make the site level to ensure the pond is full of water throughout its whole surface area and that surrounding paving or grass areas can be close to the water surface.

POND OUTLINE: Mark out the shape of your pond using string, a hosepipe or a trickle of sand for smooth curves. Don't make the shape too 'fussy' as it will be hard to make your liner fit neatly.

DIGGING THE HOLE: Ensure the hole is smooth-sided and level. If the pond is to attract wildlife, include a shallow end so that animals can easily exit.

LINING THE POND: Remove any protruding stones or roots from the sides or bottom of the hole.

- Make sure a rigid liner is well supported and doesn't wobble.

- If using a flexible liner, place a layer of builder's sand over the sides and base or use a pool underlay mat or domestic rubber-backed carpet. These help prevent the liner from being punctured. Use a good quality liner.

FILLING THE POND: Weigh down the outer edge of the liner before filling the pond to ensure it does not move in the early stages of filling. Pull the liner tightly as you fill as the weight of water presses down. Push extra sand in to support its weight around the sides.

EDGING THE POND: Once it is full, cover the edge of the pool with paving slabs or turf or dig areas to take water-associated plants such as astilbes, hostas or dwarf *Salix* (willow). Aquatic plants in baskets can be added but wait at least two weeks before introducing fish.



PLANTS FOR PONDS

Plants add interest and help hold the pond in the overall garden design. They also provide fish and wildlife with shelter, shade and food. Five types of plants need to be considered: oxygenating plants, marginal plants, water lilies, floating plants and those plants used in association with water features and planted in borders near the edges of a pond. Some water plants, particularly the oxygenating types, can become invasive. If so, remove them and destroy or compost them. Many invasive species are becoming a problem in waterways, outcompeting the native flora, so consider carefully which aquatic plants to grow in your pond and never dispose of them in local rivers, canals or ponds. Full guidelines: www.rhs.org.uk/learning/research/conservation_and_environment.asp



OXYGENATING PLANTS: Essential for wildlife and fish, they also help keep the water healthy. Plant in a perforated planting basket and place at the pond's lowest point.

MARGINAL PLANTS: Often decorative, these are grown in planting baskets. Take care to plant them at the correct depth, usually 15-45cm. Planting depths should be on the bottom of the pond, on a ledge or raised to the correct depth by placing bricks under the basket.

WATER LILIES: These come in a wide range of forms, colours and sizes, so do select the right one for your pond. Plant in water lily soil in baskets at the right depth, which should appear on the label.

FLOATING PLANTS: These simply float on the surface, adding interest and shade for fish and wildlife.

ASSOCIATED PLANTINGS: Plants in nearby borders to extend the 'water' feeling of the pond feature.

PLANTING AQUATIC BASKETS: Plastic aquatic planting baskets come in various sizes.

- Line the basket with hessian to stop soil washing into the water, then fill with soil - preferably a heavy clay type and not potting compost, peat, sand or fertiliser.
- Bed plants firmly into the soil. Crowns of lilies should be just above the soil surface. The stem base of marginals can be buried.
- Cover the top of the basket with pebbles or pea gravel and place in the pool at the correct depth.

FEEDING: Ask your garden centre or nursery about fertilisers that help with feeding aquatic plants.

