

Wildlife Gardening: Creating a pond

Ponds are a threatened habitat - the number in the UK is estimated to have declined by over a third from the 1940s to the 1980s. Garden ponds help to reduce this loss and provide beauty and interest close to home. A pond is an essential feature of any garden hoping to attract wildlife and can provide a refuge for many species of freshwater plants and animals including frogs, toads, newts, insects and birds. Size does not matter to water-loving creatures and they will find your pond within days whether it is an old sink or a properly-constructed freshwater habitat.

Getting started

- Try to site your pond in a sunny, sheltered spot where sun should reach it for most of the day
- Avoid putting it near overhanging trees as leaves that fall in will rot and use up the oxygen in the water
- Make sure there are no services such as gas and electricity where you are digging
- If possible site it near a water source so that it can be topped up in dry weather
- Decide what to do with the soil that you dig out - maybe you could create a wildflower bank or rockery

Pond design

Once you have chosen a suitable site, mark out the shape of your pond with string or canes. Try to make it as large as possible as this is better for wildlife and easier to maintain. It will need to be at least 75cm to 1 metre deep at one point to prevent it freezing over completely in the winter (freezing over causes oxygen starvation of the water). Incorporate gently sloping sides to allow animals to get in and out, plus shelves or ledges to provide variation in depth and provide a surface for pot plants.



Common frog

Digging the pond

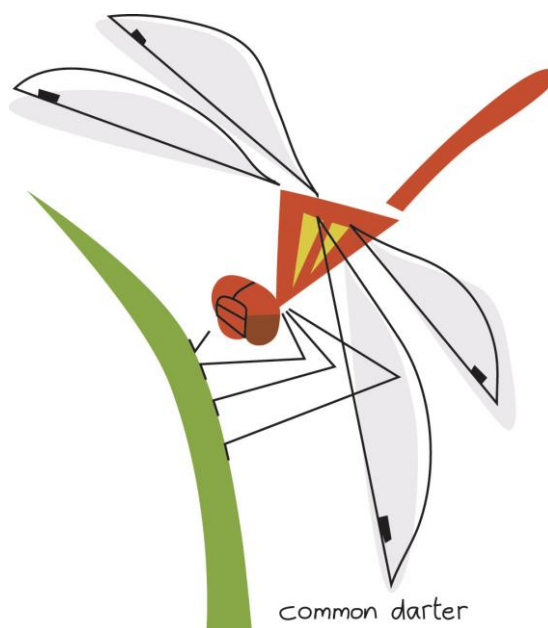
Ponds can be dug at most times of the year but a pond started in spring will establish more quickly than at other times. When you start to dig, strip the turf and keep it for lining the edge of the pond. Dig a little deeper than your plan to allow for the liner and include a trench around the edge of the pond to bury the liner edges. It is worth checking the level of the pond while digging, as some gardens are on a slope and the level of the pond will look very strange if this is not allowed for. If the pond is on a slope, some of the spoil from the hole can be used to create a bank on one side to ensure correct levels.



Lining and filling the pond

The best type of liner for a garden pond is a flexible liner such as polythene, PVC or butyl rubber. Butyl rubber will last the longest.

1. Compact the soil in the hole and remove any large or sharp stones
2. Cover the hole with a layer of old carpet or newspaper
3. Place the liner in the hole and position it centrally - it should sink into place
4. Fill the pond with water or allow it to fill naturally - rainwater is best
5. Once full, secure the liner edges in the trench with soil, trim off any excess liner and edge with turf



Planting the pond

Plants are vital components of a wildlife pond as they provide both habitat and food for a host of animal species. The aim should be to have much of the water surface covered by a good variety of plants and a complicated underwater system of roots, stems and leaves, as this will support the highest diversity of animal species. Water plants fall into four categories: submerged, floating leaf, emergent, and bog and marginal plants.

Examples of native species to use when planting up a new pond are:

Submerged plants – curled pondweed, water starwort, water crowfoot and water milfoil;

Floating leaf plants – frogbit, floating sweet-grass, broad-leaved pondweed and yellow water lily;

Emergents – water forget-me-not, amphibious bistort, arrowhead, bogbean, water mint and water plantain;

Bog and marginal plants – purple loosestrife, marsh marigold, ragged robin, bugle and marsh woundwort.

Invasive species

The following invasive species should be avoided: floating pennywort, parrots-feather, Australian swamp stonecrop, water fern, curly waterweed, Canadian pondweed, Nuttall's pondweed and green seafingers.

You can find out more about installing and maintaining a pond in our Wildlife Gardening Information Pack available to buy from our online shop.

If you would like to **find out more** about how to encourage wildlife into your garden, please see the Wildlife Gardening pages of our website at <http://www.hiwwt.org.uk/wildlife-gardening>.

If you have a question about wildlife you may find in your garden please contact **WildLine**, the Trust's free **wildlife information service** on 01489 774406 or Email: wildline@hiwwt.org.uk