



Garden ponds

Like many habitats there was a rapid decrease in the number of ponds during the 20th Century and many of those that remain are in extremely poor health. Ponds are easy to create and are a great way of attracting wildlife into your garden, enabling you to do your bit to help.

A pond does not simply attract the animals and plants that live in the habitat itself, but also draws in insects, mammals and birds that feed on the species using the pond. Ponds provide links between isolated patches of habitat, linking up the countryside and allowing species to move about freely. So, as well as providing much pleasure and enjoyment to the owner, these small bodies of water increase the habitat available for our freshwater wildlife as well as being easy and fun to create!

When to create a pond

Although you can create a pond at any time of the year, the best time to start is in the autumn as it gives the pond plenty of time to settle down before spring, when it will become a habitat for many animals.

How to create a pond

1. Choose and mark out a site

Your first step is to choose a location for your pond. Pick the sunniest location you can find, as pond plants tend to require a good deal of sunlight.

Try not to position your pond too close to deciduous trees as they drop a large quantity of leaves, which can choke the pond as they decompose. Also remember that your pond will work best if it links in with other habitats in your garden, especially as wetland creatures can be shy. Therefore position near long grass, shrubbery or even log piles, as all these will provide animals

with shelter. Once you've picked a site, mark out the perimeter using pegs and string.

2. Design the topography and start digging

You want to ensure you have varying depths in your pond with lots of shallow areas of less than 30 cm's, and if you can at least one area with a minimum depth of 60 cm's. These deeper areas provide hibernating habitats for amphibians.

Ponds also require sloping edges, similar to those found on a beach. These allow birds and other animals easy and safe access to the pond.

Plan how you want the pond to look before you get digging! If you are using an old tub or sink then add the topography in by using old bits of wood and rocks to build up different levels.

3. Line your pond and fill it up!

After you have dug your hole you want to buy a good quality liner. Make sure you tell the supplier the maximum length and depth of your pond to help them



Frogs and frogspawn - Credit Martin Batt



calculate what you need. Always buy slightly more, so that there is some room for manoeuvre!

Before you put your liner in check for and remove all sharp stones. If possible line the hole with layer of old carpet or sand, as this helps protect the liner. Next, open out the liner and drape it over the excavated area making sure that you have spare liner around all the edges.

Now it is time to add the water - the weight of the water will pull out creases as you go. If need be use rounded rocks to help smooth out the liner if the water is not adequate.

Once the pond is filled trim the liner to the shape of the pond but leave it around 20-30 cm's bigger all round. Concealing the liner can be tricky, but silt and vegetation will eventually cover it as the pond matures. You can also put a thin layer of top soil, which you previously removed to create the hole, over the excess liner should you wish to cover it quicker than nature can take hold.

Also add a small amount of top soil to the deepest area of your pond - this will help plants to establish.



Blue damselfly - Credit Jim Horsfall

4. Attracting wildlife

Wildlife doesn't appear overnight, so you will need to be patient and give your pond some time to establish. If you would like to provide a good balance of plants however, consider purchasing a water lily, or some aerating water weeds from a garden centre. Be careful to pick native species however, as many garden centres still stock non-native species which can cause problems in our watercourses. In bigger ponds some bulrushes and water iris may also help attract wildlife.

If you are wanting to create a really natural pond then avoid stocking it with species such as goldfish. Whilst they are very attractive goldfish don't really mix with wildlife ponds. They tend to generate excessive amounts of body waste, which leads to an increase in sludge and other toxic based problems for other pond-life, plants and water. Goldfish are carnivorous and eat dragonfly eggs, newt eggs, toad eggs and other small larvae.

What will use my pond?

Ponds provide important homes for amphibians including newts and frogs, mammals including bats, birds and countless insects.

Find out more

If you are not a member then find out more about Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and how to become a member, plus more about the work we do on invasive water plant species and pond dipping events we host, by contacting us in the following ways:

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