

How to: make a wildlife pond



Ponds support a greater diversity of life than any other garden habitat, and are one of the best ways to attract a range of wildlife. As well as creatures and plants living in the pond, mammals and birds will come to drink or bathe.

Designing your pond

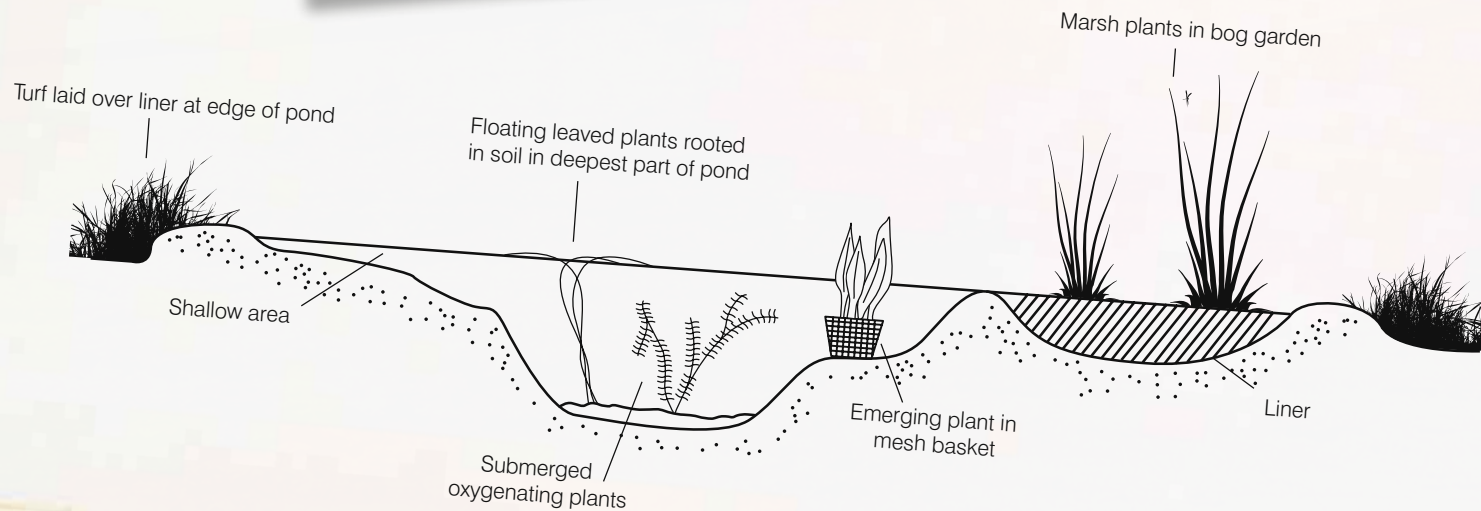
While any pond will be of some benefit, a little thought about design and planting can greatly enhance the value of your pond and your enjoyment of it.

Size the larger the better, although no pond is too small to be useful. If possible, aim for a minimum of 4-5 square meters surface area. This will allow frog or newts to breed, as well as some dragonfly species.

Shape is not critical, but is probably best kept simple. An informal curved shape looks best for a wildlife pond.

Depth profile is important. The deepest point should be at least 75 cm, this will allow hibernating amphibians and invertebrates to survive the coldest winters when the pond is frozen over. There should be a shelf about 20 to 30 cm deep to place emergent plants on. Finally, there should be a gently sloping shallow area; this can be used by bathing birds, and as it will warm up quickly in sunny weather will be occupied by many invertebrates.

A bog garden of wetland plants next to the pond will greatly increase the number of visitors to your pond. Densely planted, it will give cover to amphibians and invertebrates, and provide a new set of habitat niches. Remember, in the wider countryside wetland habitats are just as threatened as ponds.



www.thelandtrust.org.uk

How to: make a wildlife pond



Building a pond with a flexible liner

1. Lay out the outline for the pond using canes or a length of hosepipe or rope.
2. Remove the turf, and keep some of it in a shady corner. When the pond is finished turf can be laid over the edges to conceal the liner.
3. Dig a hole approximately 20 cm deeper than required to allow for sand, matting and liner. Make sure the shallow areas, shelves and deep area are where you want them. Use a spirit level to make sure the edges are level.
4. When digging out, the top soil is fertile and can be used elsewhere in the garden, perhaps to form a rockery or bank. The sub soil is recognisable as it will be a different colour. It is less fertile, but could be spread on a site for a wildflower meadow (wildflowers flourish on less fertile soils).
5. Smooth the surface, removing all stones which might damage the liner.
6. Spread a layer of sand approximately 5 cm thick all over the hole. This will protect the liner. You may wish to lay special protective matting, which can be bought when you purchase the liner. Alternatively use a piece of old carpet or underlay.
7. Lay the liner across the hole. Handle it gently and only tread on it with soft-soled shoes or bare feet. Weigh down the edges with bricks or pieces of paving slab.
8. If you intend to plant directly into mud on the bottom shovel in a thin layer of soil. Use some of the excavated sub soil as top soil is too rich in plant nutrients.
9. Fill the pond. As the water level rises the weight of the water will pull the liner into the contours of the hole. Adjust the weights around the edge to allow this to happen.
10. Do not cut off any excess liner until the pond is completely full. When the pond is full bury the edges of the liner in a trench filled with soil, or cover the edges with turf or paving slabs.

Calculate the size of the liner as follows

Length = length of pond + (2 x maximum depth)
+ 1m edging

Width = width of pond + (2 x maximum depth)
+ 1m edging

5. Smooth the surface, removing all stones which might damage the liner.
6. Spread a layer of sand approximately 5 cm thick all over the hole. This will protect the liner. You may wish to lay special protective matting, which can be bought when you purchase the liner. Alternatively use a piece of old carpet or underlay.

choosing a liner

Flexible liners are the most commonly used, as they will adapt to any size and shape. Polythene and PVC are relatively cheap, but they deteriorate when exposed to sunlight and are short-lived. Butyl rubber is more expensive, but it is the strongest and will last 30-50 years.

Tools/Materials

- Cane, Hosepipe or Rope
- Shovel
- Liner
- Soil



the
Land
Trust

www.thelandtrust.org.uk