

How to Create a Garden Pond

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Introduction

A garden pond, with the right planning and stocked with the right kind of aquatic plants and fish, will be a marvellous asset to your garden, attracting a great many wild animals and eventually becoming a miniature nature reserve. It is possible to have a pond which is self sustaining, requiring only the occasional maintenance to keep it in good condition.

The Size of the Pond

A very large pond is often difficult to access and you have to keep in mind where you would put all the water if, for any reason, it had to be emptied and, how would you do it? On the other hand, a very small pond may require constant attention as it may not be large enough to sustain itself.

A garden pond does not have to be too deep and should preferably have a shelf about 12 "below the top of the side, to site aquatic plants. If you are digging the pond to your own design and intend to have no fish, or only goldfish, or orfe, it needs to be no more and no less than 2' 6" at its greatest depth. However, if you are keeping Koi, you will need a pool depth of 4ft, but remember deep ponds can be difficult and dangerous to clean out.

Where to site the Pond

Try to site your pond in a position away from trees, as autumn leaves that fall on the pond will rot and foul the water. Where this is not possible, you may have to net the pond when the leaves are falling.

Bear in mind that rotting grass clippings in a pond are as dangerous as leaves, so you need to consider how near the lawn the pond is going to be, or how effective your lawn mower is in picking up the grass.

Ideally, a pond should have some shade rather than being in full sun all day.

If you are going to run a pump, you will also need a source of electricity.

Constructing the Pond

There are many ways to build a pond, the most common being pre-formed purchased from a garden centre, the size of which may be determined by the kind of transport available to get it home. Whilst a pre-formed pond is a ready made pond, a great deal of accuracy is required in digging the hole, getting the pond level and back filling with the soil you have taken out. Get it wrong and the pond will leak water at one end and mice and other vermin may find a home in the spaces between the soil and the pond sides.

An alternative method is to construct a pond to your own design, using a flexible liner made of Butyl, or a strong plastic. You must however, make sure there are no stones protruding from the pond sides that could puncture the liner, indeed it's a good idea to place a layer of damp sharp sand against the sides, before you place the liner ready for filling.

The third method is to dig out the shape of the pond, then set concrete at least 2" thick. This should be a permanent fixture on a clay soil, but can crack and leak on soft sandy soils. Furthermore, a period of time needs to elapse before fish can be released into a concrete pond as they are affected by the lime from the concrete base that can seep into the water.

Never use polythene sheeting as it becomes brittle and will leak in no time at all.

Water in a new pond will be green for up to four weeks until the water becomes "aired".

If the soil you take out of the pond site is of reasonable quality, you can spread it around parts of the garden, or perhaps form it into a heap for a small waterfall. You should leave it to settle for a few months before doing this.

Fish

Ponds do not have to include fish, or even plants, but a pond without one or the other would be pretty boring and become stagnant in a matter of weeks if the water remained still. However, make sure your plants are established before adding fish to the pond as initially the fish want somewhere to hide. Until now they have never been in anything bigger than a fish tank and being transferred into a garden pond must be rather traumatic.

Always buy your fish from a reputable source. Never accept fish from friends or neighbours as they may have a virus which may in turn infect your fish. Goldfish, Orfe and if your pond is large enough, Koi, and many other types of fish will survive a British winter in a pond even if it freezes over. Refrain from buying Tench as they are bottom feeders and while they eat up the food which drifts down from the surface, they continually disturb the bottom of the pond and discolour the water.

How many fish

There are all kinds of formula for calculating the numbers of fish for a pond and some can get quite complicated. A simple formula is to measure the surface of the pond and every square foot can accommodate half an inch of fish. For example, a 6ft x 4ft (24 sq ft) pond will maintain 24 x 6" fish, or 48 x 3" fish. However, if you have the right conditions, your fish will breed, so it's probably better to start off with no more than half of your maximum quota.

For garden water features, garden furniture, ponds and water feature accessories, [Click here](#) to visit an aquatics specialist.

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