

One of the best ways to encourage wildlife into your garden is by creating a pond. You'll be amazed at the range of creatures that are attracted to the water!

Where to site your pond

A warm, open and sunny site will provide the most appeal to wildlife. Although some shade in the hottest part of the day can be beneficial, try not to place too near trees as autumn leaves can be a problem and roots can puncture your pond liner. For maximum enjoyment, place your pond where you can see it from a window or a seating area.

Building your pond

A pond with surface area as small as 1m² will attract frogs and even some newts (the bigger the pond, the wider the range of wildlife), but it should be over 60cm deep in some areas to prevent the water from freezing solid in winter. The pond should have gently sloping sides to provide shallow areas - birds will drink and bathe here and frogs need shallow areas (7–10cm deep) for spawning.

Use sand or hosepipe to choose a natural shape for your pond, then start digging (you may want to keep the turf for lining the edge of the pond). When you're satisfied with the size and shape, line the hole with a layer of newspapers, sand or old carpet - this will prevent the liner from being punctured by stones. The easiest and most durable liners are made from butyl rubber, available from garden centres. Lay the liner in the hole, without stretching it too tight but removing as many creases as possible. Make sure the liner is large enough to overlap the sides and weigh it down. Fill the pond with water - rainwater is best but if you use water from the tap, allow it to stand for a few days before putting anything in.

Stocking your pond

Stock your pond with native plants suitable to your area which can be bought at garden centres or from other garden ponds in the area. Look for a mix of submerged oxygenators, floating plants and emergent plants with roots in the water and foliage above the surface, but remember that plants should never be taken from the wild. Plants to look out for include:

Submerged: spiked and whorled water-milfoil; curled pondweed; water violet; water crowfoot



Floating: frogbit; ivy leaved duckweed (can take over the pond!); white water lily

Emergent: yellow iris; meadowsweet; rushes; sedges

Wildlife

Although you can boost your pondlife by introducing a bucket of water from an established garden pond, you could also introduce disease or undesirable species. It's best therefore to allow wildlife to introduce itself - which usually happens very quickly. Check that the sides are sloping gently enough to allow animals to escape easily if they fall in - if necessary, introduce a stone or ramp. Avoid putting fish in your pond as they eat tadpoles and spawn. Creating habitat piles near the pond will encourage frogs, toads and insects, while plant life at the pond edges will provide cover for creatures to approach the pond.

Maintenance

The best time for pond maintenance is early autumn, when you are least likely to disrupt wildlife. Cut back any plants that have grown too large. Clear out blanket weed or duckweed by hand but leave it on the edge to allow insects to crawl back in to the pond. To prevent water from freezing, leave a tennis ball floating on the surface. If it does freeze, place a container of hot water on the surface to melt through (don't pour in hot water or smash the ice - this can harm creatures hibernating in your pond). Clear out leaves regularly to prevent them from rotting in the pond.

Safety First

If you have children under five regularly using your garden, think very carefully about including a pond. Even a few inches of water can be dangerous and it's safer to wait until the children are older.

Find out more

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/advice/gardening/pondsforwildlife/index.asp>

For native plants in your area visit <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/life/plants-fungi/postcode-plants/>

About the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust

The Trust is dedicated to creating and improving access to quality greenspace for the benefit of communities in Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian. We work with communities, landowners & local authorities on practical environmental projects which will improve quality of life for communities. Our projects include the creation and improvement of woodlands, gardens and parks, working alongside community groups to develop and implement projects.



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