

Woodlands Nurseries

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CHOOSING A POND

Water brings a magical 'fourth dimension' to the garden. Reflections, sparkle, musical sounds - if you have a fountain - and the opportunity to attract wildlife and grow the types of plants that are only happy in a watery environment.

There are so many ways of working with water that you are spoiled for choice. You can go formal or natural, traditional or modern; choose from open ponds or enclosed water features. There's something to suit every style and size of garden.

Choosing the right pond

A pond takes a fair amount of construction and isn't easy to alter once it's in place, so do think before you install one.

Choose a style that matches the area in your garden that you want to put it in. For example, a formal pond looks good in a formal area, but not in a wild corner, and vice versa.

Also, think about the maintenance a pond will need. A small pond with plants and fish needs nearly as much upkeep as a flowerbed of the same size.

Finally, don't forget safety. If you have small children, instead of a pond, maybe you should consider a bog garden or a wall fountain which have no standing water. Even shallow water isn't free from danger.

Siting the pond

Don't just install a pond where there happens to be a gap in the garden. It needs to be sited where you'll get the most enjoyment from it. Think of the way you and your family use the garden. Don't place the pond right where the children want to play football!

Front of garden

When the pond is close to the house, you can see it from your windows, or when you're sitting out on the patio. It's a good place for a formal water garden or the family fish pond, but because of all the activity in the area it probably won't attract much wildlife.

Back of garden

The end of the garden, where it's quiet and secluded, is the perfect place to put a wildlife pond. While you're at it, why not add a rustic gazebo nearby to use as a 'hide' for pond-watching? It makes a great garden retreat.

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How much light will your pond need?

A pond is home to a complex balance of plants and animals and needs the right conditions to keep it healthy, so when choosing a site consider the occupants and think location, location, location ...

Sunlight keeps oxygenating plants working. These plants are essential as they produce oxygen, which stops the water turning stagnant and smelly, and creates a healthy environment for everything that lives in the pond, from fish to plants.

Shade is fine for a water feature that does not support wildlife, but it's not a good choice for a pond with plants and fish.

Don't put a pond close to trees and shrubs. The leaves fall in and rot, filling the pond with sludge that will foul the water. Tree roots can also be a problem as they can work their way through the pond liner, causing leaks.

A sunny spot is essential to keep a pond healthy.

Most water plants need full sun to flower well. If there isn't enough light, water lilies will only grow leaves.

- Formal ponds are usually round or square, and the same depth throughout. They are ideal for a traditional lily pond.
- Natural ponds have gently curving, irregular shapes. They can also have sloping pebble 'beaches' which are perfect for wildlife as they allow access in and out of the water.

How big should my pond be?

To look right, a pond needs to be in proportion to its surrounding area. A tiny pond would look lost in a huge garden, while a large pond would dominate a small garden.

You also need to think about what depth to make your pond. As a general rule of thumb, a pond should be 60cm (2ft) deep if you want plants and fish in it. Water that's too shallow is vulnerable to evaporating in warm weather and freezing in winter. If you want to grow marginal plants along the edge of the water, you need to create shelves for them to stand on.

How much pond liner do I need?

Measure the length, width and maximum depth of your pond.

Twice depth plus width; twice depth plus length = the minimum size to buy.

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In practice pond liner comes off a standard size roll, so you'll usually end up having to buy a bigger piece than you need. But don't despair as the off cuts come in handy for things like lining a waterfall or small secondary pond.

Alternative water features

A water feature with no standing water makes a great alternative to a pond if you don't have much room, you've little time for pond maintenance or there are young children around and a pond is impractical on safety grounds.

A wall fountain, pebble pool or simply a large decorative jar of water, with a small pump inside rippling the water surface, have all the benefits of a water feature without all the hard work of maintaining a pond.

With this type of feature, the same water is endlessly recycled using a pump (so it will need a power supply). As there isn't a home for plants or animals, you can use water gardening chemicals to keep the water clear.