

Wild and Wet



Dorset
Wildlife Trust

Wildlife-friendly gardening



WILD AND WET

The number of natural ponds in our countryside is decreasing rapidly. You may not have space for a pond in your garden but you can definitely fit in some water - even a mini pond will make a huge difference. Creating a water feature is probably the best way to increase the biodiversity (number of species) of your garden. This leaflet will tell you how.



© Katie Wilkinson

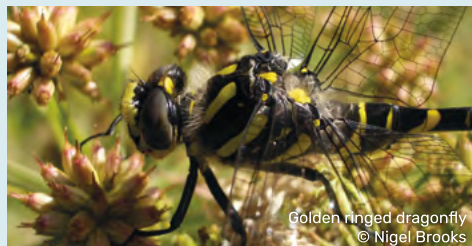


Frog
© Richard Bowler

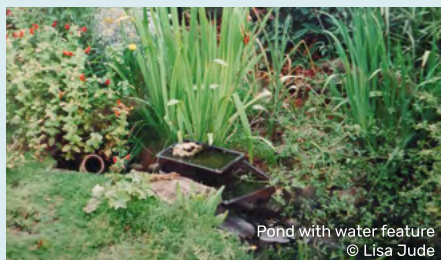
Avoid moving frogspawn and other pond life around as you may transfer a disease or invasive species.



Pond in a sink
© Brian King



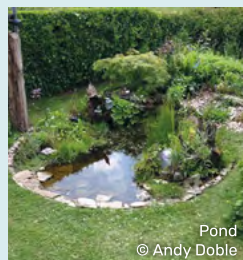
Golden ringed dragonfly
© Nigel Brooks



Pond with water feature
© Lisa Jude



Toad
© Ken Dolbear MBE



Pond
© Andy Doble

ALTERNATIVES TO PONDS

POND IN A BUCKET

It really works! Sink a bucket in the ground and add some plants. Just make sure you have rocks or a 'ladder' for land creatures to get in and out.

BUBBLER

Put in a 'bubbler' and surround it with pebbles. This requires electricity but makes a safe, beautiful feature which is also useful to wildlife.

A BOG GARDEN

Create it in a similar way to a pond but much shallower.

BIRDBATH

Put out a shallow dish or a birdbath of water and ensure it never dries out or freezes. Clean it regularly to prevent disease.

TOP TIPS FOR A THRIVING POND

1

AVOID CHEMICALS

Avoid adding chemicals to your pond. A well-planted pond will provide all the nutrients and oxygen it needs.

2

RAIN WATER

In dry summers, fill up the pond little and often, preferably from a water butt (to avoid adding nutrients), as sudden changes in temperature can be lethal to some creatures.

3

LOW MAINTENANCE

Do as little maintenance as possible in the summer months to allow insects and amphibians to breed. Never clear out more than half your pond in the autumn. Many invertebrates overwinter in the decaying vegetation.

4

GRASS

Leave an area of grass next to your pond unmown until October as the grass offers a shelter to young amphibians and other creatures.

5

NO FISH

Wildlife ponds do not have fish in them as they eat everything!

DESIGNING YOUR POND

Choose a site away from trees, in a fairly level, open, sunny spot that receives some shade in the day and include the following:

SHALLOWS

Extensive shallows less than 30cm deep and at least 30cm wide.

SLOPES

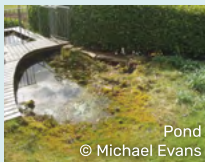
Gentle slopes rather than steep sides.

DEPTH

Varying depths to create lots of little microhabitats.

LINER

The amount of liner you will need can be calculated as width + (2 x maximum depth) x length + (2 x maximum depth).



WETLAND

A shallow area to one side for accompanying wetland/bog.

EDGES

Avoid straight edges and sharp corners, a curved edge will create more habitats for wildlife. Try to keep paving to a minimum - hot slabs bake froglets!



PLANTS

If you use tap water, in the early stages, your pond will go bright green because tap water is full of nutrients. The greenness should fade as micro-organisms eat up all the chemicals.

Your pond will need one oxygenating plant per 100sq cm surface area of water.

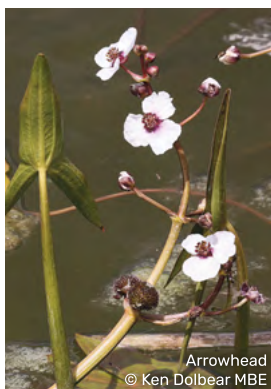
Choose from the groups of plants listed in the boxes opposite:



SHALLOWS

Shallow area of pond:

- Marsh marigold
- Yellow iris
- Purple loosestrife
- Watermint
- Brooklime
- Frogbit
- Water forget-me-not
- Arrowhead



THE POND EDGE

Damp soil at the edge of the pond or marshy area:

- Ragged robin
- Soft rush
- Cuckoo flower



DEEP

Deeper area of pond:

- Hornwort
- Willow moss
- Curled pond weed
- White water lily
- Water starwort

BUILDING THE POND



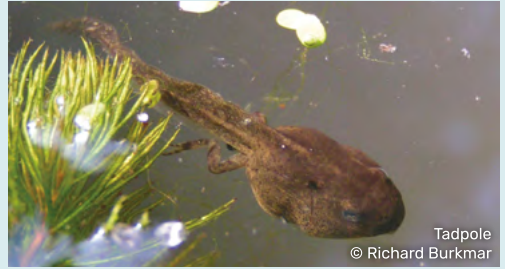
STAGE 1

Dig the pond an extra 20cm deep to accommodate a layer of sand, old carpet or newspaper to protect your liner from sharp stones. Ensure the top edges are even by using a spirit level and plank spanning the pond.



STAGE 2

Dig a trench around the pond for any overhanging pond liner. Unroll the liner, fold overhang into the trench and snip off any excess.



STAGE 3

Fill the pond with clean rain water - from a water butt ideally - or allow it to fill over a few days. Refill the trench with soil - the liner will stretch as the pond fills up. When the pond is full, place turf and/or paving stones over any exposed liner.



STAGE 4

Plant your wetland/bog area if you have made one. Put some stones or old logs near the pond edge for hibernating pond creatures. Sharp sand (not building sand) will make a good base in the bottom of the pond for plants to root in.



TROUBLESHOOTING

OXYGENATION

Top up water levels and thin out overcrowded plants in hot summers to encourage oxygenation.

ALGAL BLOOMS

Prevent algal blooms by adding barley straw which can be bought at garden or aquatic centres.



EXOTIC SPECIES

Always use native plant species in your pond. Exotic species can take over and have very few natural enemies. Avoid Canadian pondweed and take great care not to introduce crassula.



ICE

To prevent freezing over in the winter leave a tennis ball in the pond overnight then remove to create an airhole. Never smash the ice as the shock waves may kill hibernating creatures.

NUTRIENTS

Too many nutrients in your pond can cause murkiness and algal blooms. Grow lots of large-leaved plants such as water lily, water plantain and yellow flag iris to absorb the nutrients.



NUTRIENT IMBALANCES

A red hue that persists for more than a few days may be due to nutrient imbalances. Again large-leaved plants or flowering plants can cure this.

LEAVES

If your pond is very small, make sure you remove leaves from the surface in the autumn.

DORSET WILDLIFE TRUST

Our vision is to create a 'Wilder Dorset', rich in wildlife, valued and nurtured by everyone. By 2030, we want to see 30% of land and sea managed for the benefits of nature and we want to help more people take action for nature. A 'Wilder Dorset' will safeguard our natural world for future generations and enable people to live healthier and more fulfilling lives.

With the support of our 27,000 members, our volunteers, supporters, and partners, we champion wildlife and natural places on our 40 nature reserves and work to deliver nature's recovery throughout Dorset.

USEFUL WEBSITES

wildaboutgardens.org
rhs.org.uk
freshwaterhabitats.org.uk

take ACTION

#WilderDorset

There are lots of ways to encourage wildlife in your garden. Plant flowers to attract pollinators, make a hedgehog doorway in your fence or simply create different habitats such as hedges, flowering trees or long grass. Large or small, your garden will be a stepping stone, helping wildlife to travel from place to place, to breed, feed and shelter.



Make space for nature in your green space and apply for your wildlife-friendly plaque. Visit dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk/gardenscheme to find out how to qualify.

Our thanks to The Gardens Group for sponsoring this leaflet



The Gardens Group is made up of three garden centres, each as unique as the plants within them,

located in Sherborne (Castle Gardens), Yeovil (Brimsmore Gardens) and Poundbury (Poundbury Gardens).

United by a commitment to green spaces and the wider community, The Gardens Group's team of experts includes

indoor and outdoor plant enthusiasts, lepidopterists and wildlife warriors, all ready to inspire, educate and engage with gardeners of all ages and levels of expertise.

The garden centres are also home to three award-winning restaurants and a farm shop, built on people and place, as well as The Gardens Group's hugely popular and multi award-winning Christmas displays.

To find out more, go to www.thegardensgroup.co.uk.