



Cheshire
Wildlife Trust

A guide to creating a pond

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Why create a pond?

Creating a pond is one of the best ways to bring more wildlife into any area. Even a tiny 'pond in a pot' can provide habitat for a huge range of insects, two thirds of all freshwater species rely on them. Half a million ponds have been lost over the last 100 years and one in five remaining ponds are thought to be in poor condition.

A well-designed and well-sited pond can quickly become a rich wildlife haven. They can attract not only aquatic species such as frogs, but also many others that come to drink water or to find food, from birds to hedgehogs. Ponds can have a positive impact on environmental issues such as climate change and flooding and can thrive in a huge variety of environments, including urban settings.



Install a pond in your garden and you could support a range of wildlife from hedgehogs to newts!

Where to start

Assess your space

How much room do you have? Where is the best location for a pond?

Think carefully about planning a pond close to a busy footpath as lots of people very close by might impact wildlife moving in. You also want somewhere that gets a good mix of light and shade during the day.

Are there any safety concerns for children who may use the space? Can a pond be dug into the ground, or will you need to create it above ground level?



Water

It is really important that your pond is filled with rainwater. If you're patient, you can wait for your pond to fill when it rains, or you can collect rainwater in your water butts to make this easier and quicker.

Planting

Be careful not to overfill your new pond with plants. Allow it to colonise naturally. The 'new-pond' stage is very short compared to the whole life of a pond. It is important not to shorten it further by adding lots of plants right at the beginning. Many animals and plants thrive in ponds during their early years and then move on once the pond matures. There is more information about pond plants from [Freshwater Habitat Trust](#).

Monitor the plant life that establishes itself in the first few years after a pond is created. Bare earth can quickly be overtaken by invasive species such as New Zealand swamp-stonecrop, parrot's feather and water primrose. These plants should be removed before they take a hold, in order to give native plants a chance to establish themselves. If left, they can be very difficult to remove.



Pond design

Designing your pond should be fun, but there are many features and types of ponds that need to be considered to maximise the benefit to wildlife.

- The pond shouldn't be too deep, shallow water is key to wildlife.
- It should have gently sloped sides or stones to enable any wildlife that falls in to escape.
- Underwater stones and logs half in and half out of the water provide good cover and microhabitats for many aquatic species.

You can find more information on the [Freshwater habitat Trust](#) website.

Planning permission

Digging a pond will usually require planning permission from your local district or borough council. You will also need to check with the landowner if that is not you.

Make sure your pond will hold water

Ponds dug in areas that naturally hold water, such as clay, are generally the most robust. If the ground is not clay, you can use a pond liner such as a polypropylene liner to give you a leak-free pond.



Things to avoid

1. Fish

Although it may be tempting to fill your pond with fish, they can actually be detrimental to wildlife by eating the insects that make their home there. Once you add clean water and some native plants, wildlife will move in and the pond will be a thriving habitat in no time.

2. Islands or platforms

Any kind of floating platform or island in your pond can attract ducks and they can affect the water quality very quickly, making the pond uninhabitable for anything else.

3. Allowing dogs to swim in your pond

This will disturb any wildlife living in the pond, it can kill plants and will churn up sediment, negatively impacting the water quality.

What to look for as your pond establishes over time

In early spring, look for frog spawn, or strings of toad spawn, often in deeper water. Both common frogs and smooth newts colonise garden ponds. Newts are best seen just after dusk in the early summer by scanning the pond edges with a torch – check also for Daubenton's bats, sometimes seen skimming low over the surface at dusk hunting for food.

© Tom Marshall



© Adrian Clarke

Summer is the best time for pond-dipping – expect water beetles, diving beetles, water fleas, dragonfly nymphs, caddisfly larvae and aquatic snails. You can find information on pond dipping on the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust website.



Pond in a pot

We've talked about the benefits of adding a pond to a space, but it is important to realise that no space is too small for a pond, as long as you are willing to be creative. A pond doesn't have to be dug into the ground, in a really small space you can build a pond in a pot. Ponds in pots aren't only cheap or free, they are easy to create and even easier to take care of.

Miniponds can be constructed from a range of containers! Get creative and upcycle; a washing-up bowl, large plant pot, or disused sink can all be repurposed as ponds, provided you make sure wildlife can get in and out with some rocks or logs.

Choosing your pot

When choosing your pot, you need to make sure it has a wide opening for wildlife to get in and out of and it should be wider than it is deep. Shape isn't really important. You will need to check that it is completely watertight and if not then add a pond liner.

Add gravel and rocks to your pond to create different depths. Ensure there is an easy route out for anything that might fall in.

Like a big pond, fill with rainwater and don't add too many plants, often a single plant will be enough.



Make sure you place it in a spot that gets sun and shade, avoid areas that are in full sun all day so the water doesn't evaporate.

© Amy Savage

How to build a mini wildlife pond

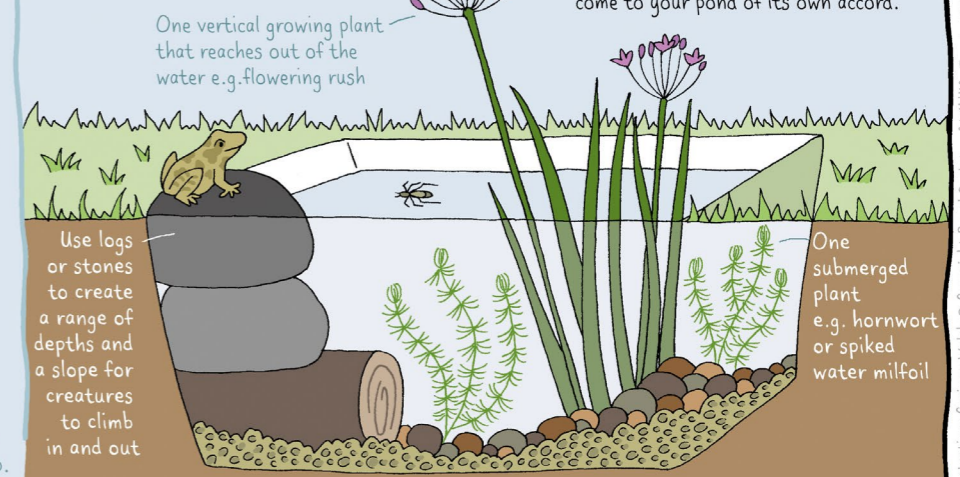


You will need:

- a watertight container*
- old bricks, rocks and pebbles
- pond plants
- spade

* Is there anything that you can upcycle? It could be an old washing-up bowl, sink or even a plant pot. Aim for 20–30cm deep.

- 1 Choose a spot. Your pond will need light, but not full sunlight all day. You can dig a hole and sink your container, or just have it sitting on top.
- 2 If the container isn't watertight, e.g. an old plant pot, then add a piece of pond liner.
- 3 Add a layer of gravel and rocks.
- 4 Fill your pond with rainwater (tap water contains chemicals).
- 5 Start planting... you only need two or three plants.
- 6 Now watch and wait! Wildlife will come to your pond of its own accord.



Have you been inspired to do something for nature? Inspire others by sharing your story on social media and add it to our [interactive map](#) of local people like you taking action to bring wildlife back.

For more information head to:

- [How to Manage a pond for wildlife](#) | Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- [Create A Pond](#) - Freshwater Habitats Trust
- [Ponds](#) - Freshwater Habitats Trust
- [Million Ponds Project](#) - Freshwater Habitats Trust
- [Create ponds and lakes](#) - GOV.UK

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