

HOW TO BUILD A MINI POND TO SUPPORT WILDLIFE

A small pond can transform how much wildlife will come to call your garden home.

Even the simplest bucket, basin or pot can offer a rest stop, refreshment or even a home to a host of beautiful creatures from dragonflies, to bees and bats.

SAFETY FIRST

If there are young children around, ponds are not recommended because of the risk of drowning.

For more information visit: watersafety.ie/recreation

Ponds can pose a risk to pets too, for more advice please visit: bluecross.org.uk/advice/pets/pet-friendly-garden

Drimnagh
COMMUNITY
ENVIRONMENTAL
GROUP

Individual actions, multiplied

1. PICK A SPOT

A healthy pond needs a roughly even amount of sunlight and shade. Avoid areas where a lot of leaves might fall into the water as this could clog up your pond. If you have an existing wildlife feature like a hedge, log pile or long growth grass, the pond will do best beside that.



2. FIND A CONTAINER

There are lots of household objects that can be repurposed to make the perfect pond. Plastic tubs, buckets, bins or basins are great because they're often thick and durable. Flower buckets from supermarkets are perfect too, and freely available from your local shop.



3. DIG A HOLE

Taking your time at this stage will pay off. Make sure you have gloves, a spade or fork that suits your size, and keep an eye of your posture to protect your back. As you're digging, take care to avoid any glass, metal or other hazards you uncover. These are very common garden soil.



4. CHECK THE LEVELS

Ideally the top of your pond should sit at, or just below, the surface of the soil. If you have a spirit level, check the level from front to back and side to side. This will allow water to reach the top on all sides once it's filled.



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HOW TO CHOOSE PLANTS

There are a number of non native aquatic plants available to buy which are known to be invasive or have that potential. As a rule of thumb go for only native plants, from buy only reputable suppliers.

For more information visit: bit.ly/invasivepondplants



Photo by Ken Duffy

5. LINE THE BASE

Add a layer of clean sand or gravel at the bottom of the pond to create a more natural surface. This also helps by creating room for beneficial microorganisms to thrive. Children's play sand is ideal if you have some, but others are fine too once they've been given a quick rinse.



6. ADD PERCHES & A RAMP

Creatures visit ponds in a few different ways so you'll need to provide the right access to keep them safe. A few stones sticking out of the water will allow bees to drink, and a brick or log ramp will allow animals like hedgehogs who fall in to find their way out.



7. FILL WITH RAINWATER

Rainwater is best for ponds as tap water uses chemical treatments that aren't great for wildlife. You can collect rainwater using a water butt, or a few buckets and pots in the garden. If you only have tap water, leave it outside in a bucket for 24 hours to allow any chemicals to evaporate.



8. ADD PLANTS

Wildlife ponds don't use pumps or filters as these would harm the creatures living in the water. All you need is a native oxygenating plant such as Hornwort to keep the water fresh. Then you can line the edges with some dandelions, sods of grass or other greenery.



What can I expect to see in the pond?

Very soon after you've finished your pond, you can expect to see some kind of activity.

Depending on your surroundings, and how much wildlife is nearby, you might begin to spot dragonflies, damselflies or other aquatic insects. You might also glimpse a few thirsty pollinators and birds, or a passing frog.

It's important to be patient though. As your pond and garden mature, more and more creatures will show up.

Oxygenating plants

There are a few reliable native oxygenating plants that are available seasonally, usually from April onwards.

Look out for:
Hornwort/
Ceratophyllum demersum

Dwarf Hair Grass/
Eleocharis acicularis

Whorled Water Milfoil/
Myriophyllum verticillatum