

Water Gardens

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Adding a water garden to your home's outdoor environment has some fantastic benefits. Not only are they beautiful to see and hear, but they attract insect eaters like hummingbirds and dragonflies.

In a well-balanced water garden, the fish clean the water by eating algae and their waste fertilizes the plants to stimulate growth. Such ponds are relatively inexpensive and easy to set up. To build your own, gather the following materials:

- 1/2 whiskey (or stoneware) barrel, 12 inches to 16 inches deep (the deeper, the better)
- 1 pond liner, pre-formed if possible
- 1 water pump, should pump 140 gallons to 200 gallons per hour
- 20 bricks
- 1 plug with a ground fault interrupter (GFI)
- 1 extension cord
- 1 bog plant (i.e. water clover, umbrella palms, tropical water canna, water pennywort, iris and water lilies)
- Several handfuls of floating plants (i.e. shellflower, water hyacinth, duckweed, azolla and salvinia) Note: Floating plants bob on the surface of the water and don't need soil. If they reproduce quickly, simply thin them from time to time.
- 2 1-quart underwater grasses (i.e. anacharis or vallisneria)
- Fish: 2 goldfish or 12 mosquito fish

Setting up Your Pond:

Place your whisky barrel in an area that gets morning sun and afternoon shade.

Use a hose to drench the barrel with water until it swells, then place the liner inside.

Note: If the liner sits too low, put enough play sand in the barrel to raise the liner.

Place several bricks in the bottom of the liner, then set the pump on the bricks before you add the water. If the pump is the right height, you'll see bubbles at the surface of the water.

If desired, add a pond primer like Pond Perfect (For more information, call The Lily Pond at (602) 273-1805.)

Wait a few days before adding plants to your pond -- the water needs to detoxify and algae needs to build up.

Adding Plants to Your Pond:

Place bricks inside the pond to create multilevel surfaces for the plants.

Submerge plants to oxygenate the water. Note: Roots need to be submerged in soil, however fertilizing is never necessary.

Wait two to three weeks before adding goldfish to your pond or three days before adding mosquito fish.

Adding Fish to Your Pond:

Float fish on the top of the pond for several minutes in the bag they came in. This will allow the fish to acclimate to the pond's water temperature.

General Pond Maintenance:

About once each season, you'll notice the crown of the plant has grown above the soil line. This indicates that it's time to re-pot your plants. To do so, simply place a little sand on the top of the dirt to keep soil from coming out.

Change your pond's water once or twice each week (about 16 oz. each time). If it's available, fresh rain water is excellent to use when you refill your pond -- its pH is perfect.

Only blooming plants need fertilizer. To add fertilizer, just place a fertilizer spike in the pot during blooming season.