



Bringing Wildlife Home

Backyard Ponds

These easy to create water features add wonderful diversity to your yard and provide endless hours of entertainment and educational opportunities for you and your family. Backyard ponds attract beneficial wildlife soon after they are created. Furthermore, balanced backyard ponds rarely attract unusual numbers of mosquitoes. A variety of plants and animals will work together to maintain your pond as a healthy ecosystem.



Dragonfly juveniles, or nymphs, live underwater for months or years before emerging as adults.

Designing Your Pond

- **Create beach-side property** – If possible, use a flexible pond liner and design a beach or ledge into your pond edge or construct one using stacked rocks or logs. This gradual change in depth allows critters to get in and out easily, while giving birds and butterflies a place to dip into shallow water. Pond ledges also create spaces for shallow-water aquatic plants to grow.
- **Full sun or partial shade?** – Different critters will inhabit your pond, depending on the amount of sunlight it receives. Position your pond where it will receive some direct sun, but will not be in full sun at all times.

Ecologically balanced backyard ponds attract beneficial wildlife soon after they are created and rarely attract unusual numbers of mosquitoes.

Caring for Your Pond

The healthiest backyard pond will closely resemble a natural pond, with plenty of native plants, some debris settling on the bottom, and perhaps a log or branch floating on the surface. A pond with these ingredients will balance itself, and algal growth will be seasonal and minimal.

- **Pumps, waterfalls, and fountains** – These elements create a wonderful environment for wildlife. Birds are actually attracted to moving water.



Provide a place for them to land, and birds will be frequent visitors. Keeping water circulating will also help prevent mosquito larvae from hatching.

- **Jump-start your pond life** – Add a bucket of water from a nearby natural pond. One bucket will introduce millions of organisms to help keep the system in check.
- **The depth of your pond and the area you live in** – These factors determine the degree at which your pond will freeze. If your pond freezes entirely to the bottom, plants and wildlife may not survive.
- **Safety** – If small children play near your pond, you may want to add a fence for safety purposes.
- **Water source** – If you fill your pond with water that is being treated with chlorine, consider using a de-chlorinator.
- **Keeping algae in check** – Barley straw is a natural way to limit algae growth. It can be bought by the bale for large ponds or in small packs for small ponds.

For additional information about backyard ponds, consult the Natural Resources Conservation Service website at www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/bkpond.html.

Enjoying Your Pond

The great joy of having a backyard pond is observing the wildlife that gather there.

- To get started with frog watching, and to learn about the frogs near you, visit the Nature Quest™ FrogwatchUSA website at www.nwf.org/frogwatchUSA/index.cfm.
- If you are interested in learning more about dragonflies, and attracting dragonflies to your habitat, visit www.nwf.org/backyard/attractdragonflies.cfm.



Visit www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife for more information.

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