



Create A Garden Oasis with A Water Feature

Adding a water feature to your landscape enhances its visual appeal, adds a sense of tranquility to outdoor spaces, and supports birds and other wildlife.

When designing a water feature, keep the following in mind:

- Style of your home and backdrop for the water feature
- Location – can you see it from inside the house?
- What kind of sound do you want to hear – is it the peaceful sound of a gentle flow or the invigorating sound of fast-moving water?
- Sun exposure
- Protection against the wind
- Debris from trees
- Nearby power supply
- Local zoning regulations
- Location of underground utilities – call 811 for a free utility locate before digging.
- Nearby water access point

If you choose containers for your water feature, your options are only limited by what is available and your creativity. You can use tubs, bowls, pots, birdbaths, urns, whiskey barrels, or stone troughs. If aquatic life, such as fish or plants, is present in a container or pond, a minimum depth of 15 inches is required. Metal containers will heat up during hot weather and are not suitable for fish or plants.

Types of Water Features

Birdbaths

Place near shrubs, trees, or other cover to help birds feel safe and protected. You can choose a birdbath with a bubbler, which adds movement to attract birds and create a pleasant sound. Clean the birdbath regularly by scrubbing out any bird droppings and algae, and changing standing water.

Fountains

Fountains typically have a water chamber that is pumped through an opening, where it pools before flowing back into the chamber, creating a pleasant sound. Those made from containers come in various sizes and shapes, depending on your space and the style you like.

Pondless Waterfalls

Constructed of drilled stone, these waterfalls have cascading water without a visible pond. They can be suitable for smaller yards and are lower maintenance than ponds. These installations typically have a resonance chamber at the base to enhance the sound of water.

Ponds with a Waterfall

A preformed or “lined” pond area that recirculates water with a small pump. It can be filled with plants and fish or simply cascade from a collection point into the pool.

Wildlife Ponds

They add natural beauty to your landscape and can attract amphibians, reptiles, raccoons, deer, dragonflies, and some waterfowl. It can be still or have a waterfall. Moving water discourages mosquitoes. If you plan to add fish or other species to your pond, contact your local Department of Fish and Wildlife for guidance on appropriate native options.

Streams or Rills

These types consist of a meandering trench with a liner designed to channel water into a section that will convey water into a ponded area or into a buried vessel for recirculation.

Special Considerations

- Before building a pond, contact your local zoning or planning office. There may be restrictions on the size, depth, or even location of your pond.
- Assess whether you have time to care for a large water feature that requires regular maintenance for optimum performance.
- No matter which water feature you choose for a DIY project or professional setup, you will need to maintain it to keep it working.
- If you select a container, it should be drained and stored indoors during the cold winter months to protect the pump and the container’s ceramic coating.

Resources:

Creating a Wildlife Pond, OSU Extension

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pub/ec-1548-wildlife-garden-create-garden-pond-wildlife>

How To Build a Fountain: A DIY Guide for Backyard Tranquility

<https://www.thisoldhouse.com/landscaping/21016638/how-to-build-a-fountain>

Wildlife Friendly Water Features, The National Wildlife Federation https://www.nwf.org/-/media/PDFs/Garden-for-Wildlife/Gardening-Tips/Ponds_TipSheet_Final.pdf

Master Gardener™ advice

Contact local OSU Extension office for Master Gardener advice. Check this site for contact information <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/metro/gardening-help-resources>

For 10-Minute University™ handouts and class schedule, visit

<https://cmastergardeners.org/10-minute-university/>

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