

# Natural Pool Checklist

By Nicole Nichols-West

- Natural Swimming Pool
  - Hollow a hole in the ground.
  - Make sure the sides slope.
  - Reserve at least 50 percent of your pool's surface area for shallow plants.
  - Separate the swimming area of your pool and the filtration area.
  - Inside the plant zone, the water should get steadily deeper, reaching a maximum depth of 18 inches near the swimming zone.
  - Aerate the water so the water organisms' oxygen needs are met.
  - Channel water from your pump into your plant zone through the use of PVC tubes.
  - Bury the tubing in the soil about 18 inches deep.
  - Use skimmers hooked up to an additional small pump, to suck off floating undesirables.
  - Apply a layer of bentonite clay to seal the soil or lay a synthetic liner.
  - If you choose a liner, select one made of ethylene propylene diene monomer rather than PVC.
  - Cover the bottom of the pool with 4 to 5 inches of gravel.
  - Open the spigot and run water through the gravel.
  - Build cobblestone steps for access into and out of the pool.
  - To finish the edges of your pool, run a plate compactor around the perimeter.
  - Use the perimeter with rocks, flagstone or wood planking.
  - Plant the perimeter right next to the edge and let the plants stabilize it.
- Concrete Options
  - Consider construction with cement.
  - Have the right mix and the right density to prevent cracking.
  - After the concrete is poured, trowel on a 1/8 inch coat of stucco to waterproof the pool, since concrete is porous.
  - Prepare the plant zone with 3 to 6 inches of soil.
  - Avoid harvesting soil from areas where animal excrement is prevalent.

- Disturb the soil as little as possible and let the pool rest for a week before installing plants.
- Plants
  - Before collecting a single plant from the wild, know the laws protecting wetlands and their plants.
  - Be sure to choose plants suited to your climate.
  - Obtain your plants from a native-plant supplier.
  - Be sure to include submergent plants such as common waterweed for their high oxygen output.
  - In water 6 to 18 inches deep, plant a mix of floating, submergent and emergent plants.
  - Group plants according to height and type.
  - Place your plants into the soil, anchoring them, with plenty of gravel.
- Maintenance
  - Remove plant litter in spring and fall.
  - Keep your water level constant, be prepared to add water as needed.
  - Check the mechanical systems annually.